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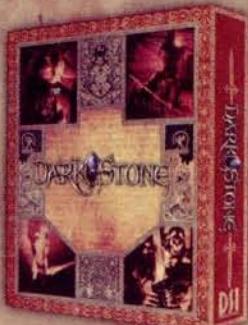
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The Wyrms Turn™ Whistling Past the Graveyard

No matter whether you're a tough guy who scoffs at the thought of being scared by a mere movie or a willing victim of screen scares and ghost stories, you've probably cracked a joke or at least broken out into nervous laughter when frightened. It's only human to make light of the things that terrify you, and it's that element that makes the difference between a bad horror experience and a wickedly effective one.

This summer, two of my favorite movies took wildly different tacks in mixing humor with terror: *The Mummy* and *The Blair Witch Project*.

In this issue's "Dungeon Mastery," Lester Smith describes how to mix shrieks with laughs in a heroic roleplaying game, so I'll limit myself to these observations: While *The Mummy* was an often silly adventure romp, it had its truly chilling moments. And while *The Blair Witch Project* might be the most terrifying movie since *The Exorcist*, I heard more laughs than screams from the audience ... at least in the first half.

Drop us a note to share your experiences with horror and humor in your AD&D® game.

Movies and games aren't as frightening as changes at work, so it was with some trepidation that we greeted our new group publisher, Johnny Wilson. We knew he was a former co-owner of the successful *Computer Gaming World* magazine, so he was no stranger to games. Still, you can never tell how a new guy will turn out. Sometimes you get a suit, but if you're lucky you get a gamer.

The moment of truth came when Johnny joined our 3rd Edition playtest campaign as Embry the bard. He showed up late with his arms full of business papers. He seemed distracted, to say the least. After introductions, he settled down quietly, rarely venturing a comment—surely a bad sign!

The most terrifying adventures can also make you laugh.

Worse yet, while the rest of us plunged through the sewers of Rethq in search of our nemesis, Scalira Kallaster, Johnny's attention was pinned to his papers. He kept jotting notes, obviously thinking about work.

At least he was making a show of being interested in the game. Maybe

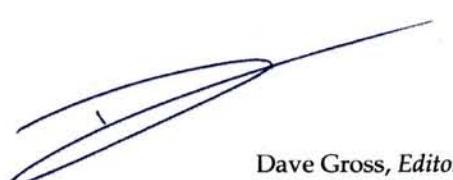
he'd been a gamer once, but somewhere along the line, he'd grown up and become a suit. I tried to swallow my

disappointment and concentrated on exploring Scalira's lair, eventually finding her skeletal minions the hard way.

Just as the fight broke out, Johnny looked up and declared to the DM, "Embry gathers his thoughts and sings an inspiring tune."

And then Johnny lifted the notes he'd been taking, adjusted his glasses, and began to sing the ballad he'd been composing during our explorations. He had a stanza for nearly every character in the party, and what he lacked in vocal talent, he made up in sheer gusto.

We've got ourselves a gamer, folks.



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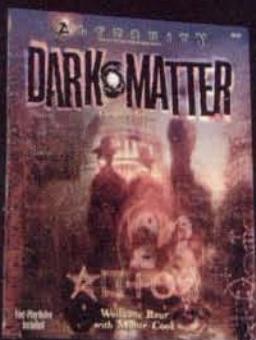
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Evil Rules!

I'm responding to the "The Wyrm's Turn" from issue #261 where Mr. Gross says that playing evil characters is "more a fashion statement than a role-playing pursuit." I realize that, in general, people play good or neutral characters. In most campaigns, an evil PC is almost never seen. From my experience with DMs though, I find this rarity is because the DMs forbid their players to play evil characters.

Admittedly, evil characters tend to ruin adventures. It's obviously difficult to run an adventure when one character is stealing from or killing the other PCs. Despite this, I have to disagree with Mr. Gross when he says that playing villains doesn't last. I don't think playing anti-heroes is only for the young. In fact, I've

go out of his way to be a psychopath. Just because a character has a complete lack of morality doesn't mean he has to be an idiot and go around razing the countryside and drawing unwanted attention to himself. I think evil characters can be used for worthwhile role-playing, and my experiences with this character over the past six years prove this point.

Unfortunately few of the DMs I play with let their players make evil characters. Running a module with an evil party is nearly impossible. A perfect example is the adventure, *For Duty and Deity*, where the party must save Waukeen from the Abyss. My DM once ran the module for a party that tried to kill Waukeen so they could steal her portfolio and ascend to godhood. Later,

DM's job. If nothing else, the players let you get away with being a ham as long as you let them eventually fight and, preferably, defeat the villain.

I stand my ground on evil player characters. One of the unspoken truths of the AD&D® game is that the player characters are heroes, and they're meant to prevail. That doesn't mean it should be easy for the heroes, and it doesn't mean that they win every time, but it's a lot more fun to fight against evil than for it.

As a DM, I find it hard to cheer for my players when they aren't acting like heroes. As a player, I don't trust a player character who seems less than virtuous. One thing you can count on when you're playing an evil character is that no one else will trust you—especially not the other evil characters. The only way you can count on the others is if you're all more or less good people.

In any event, Matthew, you make some good points about evil player characters making the game more "interesting." In the Chinese sense, then, I'm sure you'll play in interesting times.

Admittedly, evil characters tend to ruin adventures.

found that the longer I've been role-playing, the more likely I am to play an evil character.

I've been playing AD&D for eleven years, and from all my roleplaying experiences, I find the evil characters I play to be the most memorable. In my current campaign, I'm playing a neutral evil elven thief/mage who, during the course of his career, has killed three player characters and stolen from most members of his party. Though my character has been a bane to the party, the rest of the party continues to adventure with him because they aren't aware of his evil activities. Also, just because a character is evil doesn't mean he has to

though, my DM ran the adventure for my party, where I was playing the only evil character, and we completed the adventure successfully and normally. My character didn't try to kill Waukeen only because he knew the rest of his good party would try to stop him.

So the point is, an evil character played with a little tact and survival instinct easily functions in most campaigns.

Matthew Avery
Berkeley, CA

I do love playing evil characters—but only when I'm the Dungeon Master. In fact, playing the villains is one of the perks of the

Reformulated

After reading "Cliche's the Thing" [the editorial in issue #262], I was reminded of two adventures I pulled off by taking an old storyline and twisting it around.

The first was a search for buried treasure for low-level PCs. First, the characters encounter a merchant who knows of a map to a hidden treasure cache in the mountains. The map is in the possession of a retired warlord who is staying at his summer villa nearby. After retrieving the map, the heroes must get to the X on the map, fighting whatever encounters the DM might want to insert. On reaching the

spot, however, the ground falls out from under them, and they plunge right into a drow outpost.

I thought that one was clever, so the next time I had to make up a quick adventure for a group of experienced gamers, I used the same formula.

A king summons the PCs to his castle, where he explains that an evil dragon has kidnapped his daughter and offers them a large reward to reclaim her. Once they reach the dragon's cave, the PCs find that the dragon is a silver, not evil. Smart PCs talk to the dragon and learn that the king is an evil tyrant, oppressing his people. The silver dragon, knowing that he alone could not challenge the might of the king's army, decided to ransom the king's daughter for the kingdom. From there, the PCs can do what they wish, but the dragon will offer a much larger reward in exchange for helping him win the kingdom. Should they decide to reclaim the princess anyway, they return to find no reward. Instead, to keep his treasury full, the king puts them into a dungeon for three days, after which they are executed unless they can escape.

I like both of these because they open up possibilities for a much longer campaign. The drow I used in the first one planted the map to gain information for an invasion. The second could lead to a full scale, possibly covert rebellion against this king.

Andrew Sherbo
Lakewood, CO

Excellent twists on old themes, Andrew! This is exactly the sort of reworking of old stories that keeps classic adventures alive with a little work from the DM.

Has anyone tried this method with a well-known module? I've run the Slave Lords series so many times that I don't remember the little tweaks I made each time, but I know it's never run the same way twice, even with players who'd already toppled the slavers once or twice before. Let's hear from those who've retooled the Drow series or the Temple of Elemental Evil for players who might remember the dungeon too well... but who are still surprised at the way things have changed.

Who Is the Gamer of the Month?

Do you know a player who deserves more than a few measly experience points and a *sword +1*? We're talking about the sort of player who makes you cheer during combat, weep when the orcs murder the stableboy, or just bust a gut laughing after insulting the queen of the elves.

And let's not forget the Dungeon Master. Is yours a talespinner of bardic ability? Are the NPCs so vivid that you catch yourself writing them Christmas cards? Is the DM's plot so cunning you could pin a tail to it and call it a weasel?

If you know a player or DM who deserves praise, tell us more about this paragon of roleplaying in a letter addressed to "Player of the Month" or "DM of the Month" at the "DMail" address. Include not only your own name and address, but also that of your great player (including phone number and email).

Each month, we'll choose one worthy player of the month to shower with accolades and a bare minimum of public humiliation.



Dragon Lords

In issue #260, you touch on the offspring of both Tiamat and Bahamut. These are two of the most powerful pre-2nd Edition monsters. They have not been heard from since then. These two are supposed to be the dragon lords, but according to stats from the old *Monster Manual*, either would be destroyed by many common 2nd Edition monsters. Is it possibly time to revamp these two? The DRAGONLANCE® Fifth Age game has wyrms that could sneeze and kill these two.

In 1979 when I started playing the D&D® game, the name Tiamat struck fear in the heart of all PCs; now I bring up the name to new players and get nothing but blank stares. It is time for the second coming of the most dreaded beast in all of RPG-land.

Aaron Burroughs
San Antonio, TX

Your wish is our... aw, you've heard it before. After checking with roleplaying R&D to learn their plans for the terrible twosome, we've penciled in a plan to bring Tiamat and Bahamut back to the game with a vengeance. Look for them next June—perhaps as part of a sneak preview of the 3rd Edition D&D® game!

The Rumor Mill

I've recently rediscovered the magazine, and since then, I've enjoyed reading the "Dungeonecraft" articles. In response to the latest issue (#261), I offer yet another alternative to the "Rumor Mill."

In my small group, we've always liked the idea of knowing the big picture, letting events outside of the PCs' sphere of influence take on a life of their own. In my campaign world, I've taken to doing a monthly newspaper of sorts, the *Kolanor Chronicles*. It is nothing more than a single, three-column page that summarizes eight to ten recent stories from the campaign world. These range from the second-hand tale of an adventurer seeking a lost island to the latest jousting tourneys.

For chronological perspective, I make sure to add a small piece on any events that have taken place as a direct result of the characters' actions. By doing one issue of the *Chronicles* per game month, I introduce events that might lead the PCs into future adventures, aid them on the current quest, or (at worst) make them more familiar with the setting. It also provides me with a creative outlet that only enhances the details of those places to which the PCs have yet to travel.

The *Chronicles* take very little time to create. I spend maybe five minutes deciding on locations for the stories (spreading them both far and wide across my campaign world) and no more than half an hour developing a basic story. By limiting each article to a couple of paragraphs, I also avoid setting anything in stone should I wish to change a detail in the future.

Once completed, each issue is made available to the players (as are the "back-issues") before, during, and after game sessions. I am trying to keep at least one issue posted on my Web site, the Bard's Abode (www.telepath.com/lmgunter) for those interested in my world. I currently have the first of the three issues posted.

Mark Gunter
Norman, OK

The Lost Psionics

I've always loved psionicists, and "Psi-Kits" from issue #255 got our group interested in including more psionic-oriented themes in our adventures. We especially like the idea of the mind mage and are planning on working one secretly into the next campaign we start.

Our only problem is the small amount of literature on actual psionic powers. I own *The Complete Psionic Handbook*, *PLAYERS OPTION®: Skills & Powers*, and *Dragon Kings*, but there are many, many powers that simply aren't covered in any of the three books.

Since *Will and the Way* is now out of print, none of us have any idea about how to handle such psionic effects as *summon planar energies* or *probability manipulation*. We want to know whether there are any current publications that would have descriptions of these lost psionics, or whether there are any in the works.

Ian R. Wells
Wheaton, IL

According to AD&D category manager Keith Strohm, "Currently, there are no plans to release out-of-print psionics books in paper format. We are examining ways to make these products available electronically." As if you needed an excuse, that's another good reason to check out our constantly expanding Web site at www.wizards.com.

Worlds Collide

When I first saw the article on sheens from issue #258, I recognized the possible cross-over between AD&D and the artifacts of the *Magic: the Gathering* TCG. I was a little disturbed by the trend that could start. I realize that Wizards of the Coast can freely combine their intellectual properties and that it probably would be smart business sense to combine the two, but I didn't want to see it.

After two weeks of avoiding the article, I finally read it and was pleasantly surprised. I will not add sheens to my GREYHAWK® campaign, but when the party travels to the outer planes, I might incorporate them to challenge powerful characters. I still don't want to see products that clumsily combine

game worlds, but good articles like this one are welcome.

Keith McAuslan
Pawtucket, RI

So what you're saying is, "Don't print anything I might not like, unless it's really great." We get that a lot.

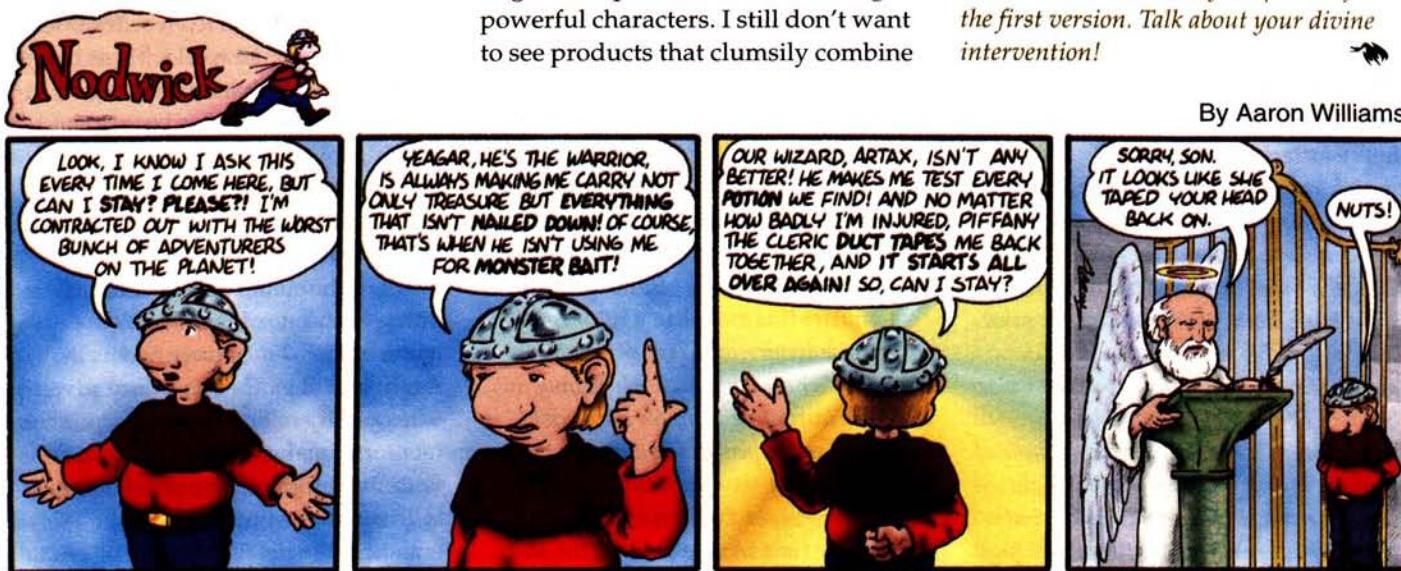
We often see article proposals that look ridiculous on the surface. Every once in a while, we'll take a chance on one and end up pleasantly surprised. The "Mage vs. Machine" article began as an issue's theme but took on a life of its own when Todd Lockwood's cover painting blew us away. When we showed it to Bruce Cordell, it all came together.

Even after seeing the completed article, we were worried it would be a love-it-or-hate-it piece. Much to our delight, the hate-it contingent was tiny compared to those who thought they hated the idea but then fell in love with some or all of the article.

The love-it response was so great that the sequel is slated for next April, when we combine the talents of Messrs. Lockwood and Cordell for "Revenge of the Sheens!" As if that weren't enough, they'll also pool their talents on one of the coolest 3rd-Edition articles we've yet seen proposed. It'll be a while before that one sees fruition, but trust us: It'll be worth the wait.

Other articles inspired by artwork include last issue's "Heaven's Trump," which James Wyatt wrote for us after Brom showed us the beautiful painting that opens the article. As it turned out, another version of the painting was used for the Warriors of Heaven product, so we were the lucky recipients of the first version. Talk about your divine intervention!

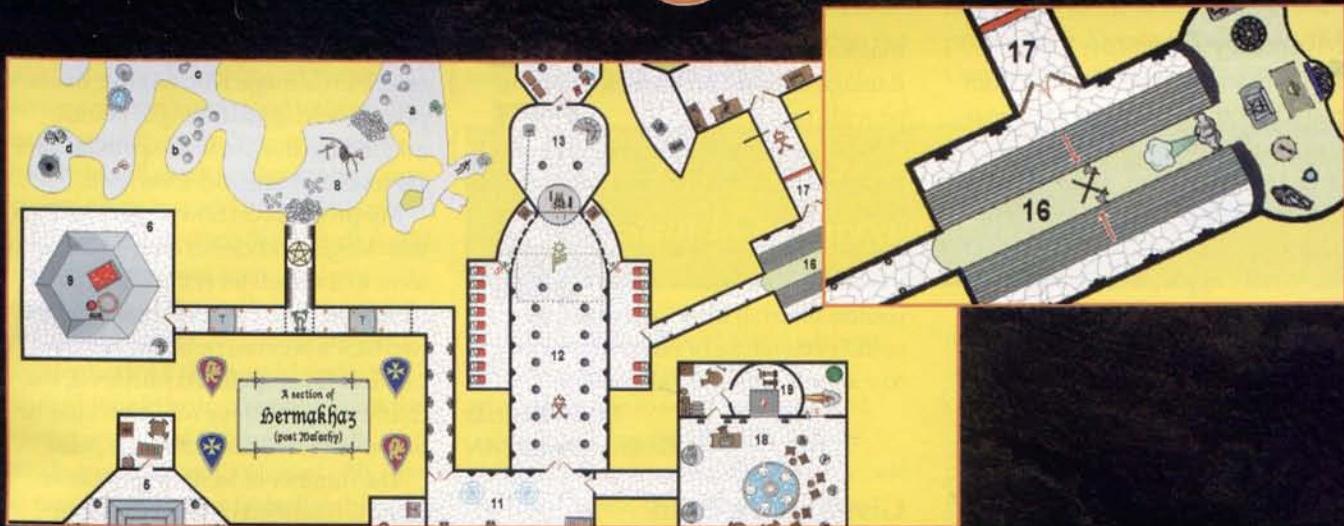
By Aaron Williams



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Forum

A Monetary Decision

I am mildly annoyed by the letter from Daniel Chilcott, "More Than Mercenaries," in issue #261.

Daniel seems to think that since his adventurers never receive "compensation," then no other PCs out there do either. While I applaud his group's efforts to stick to heroics more than profit, it just doesn't always work that way for others.

While I must admit that none of my friends' PCs are lawful good, even the most heroic and respectable adventurers need to keep themselves fed. While the common permission, "You may have any treasure you find," often more than remunerates the PCs, sometimes it just doesn't work out.

Respectable adventurers need to keep themselves fed.

Case One: The adventurers do indeed find an enormous horde of treasure after their quest. However, the numerous injuries, lost items, mishaps, and nasty enemy magic they encounter all but bankrupts them of their newfound wealth. Resurrecting people, purchasing supplies, and getting rid of evil curses can quickly add up.

Case Two: The monsters the PCs fought carried no treasure, or the treasure was beyond the PCs' access. (Perhaps the lich hides his goodies in a secret room they missed.) They find only incidental treasure, like 20 or 30 copper pieces on each wimpy monster they kill. Now, they have no money or

magical items to compensate for the damage inflicted on them, let alone to provide profit.

While the word "mercenary" might paint your adventurers in a bad light, it's sometimes the only way to survive, at least at low levels. A thousand gold pieces from the leader of the village couldn't hurt. If the PCs wished, they could even refuse or return the money to conform with their alignment.

Bryan Rantala
Grand Marais, MN

Give Them a Point

I agree with Justin Bacon's explanation of spellcasting in the AD&D game, in which a wizard does not memorize a spell but rather pre-casts

it during study. However, I have a high disregard for the current system wherein a mage can cast five 1st-level spells, five 2nd-level spells, four 3rd-level spells, and so on. If that is so, then why aren't fighters limited to 50 slashes, 40 thrusts, and 30 parries or weightlifters limited to 30 crunches and 20 presses?

Probably the best alternative to the current spell system is to apply a rule similar to that controlling Psionic Strength Points, wherein a mage has a certain pool of magical ability (some say mana) from which to pick spells.

However, a mage still must study spells and pre-cast them, as per Justin

Question of the Month

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How do you use miniatures in your AD&D game?

Bacon's explanation. In a given adventure, then, a mage who has five mana points (or Magical Strength Points) might have five 1st-level spells or three 1st-level and one 2nd-level spell.

My proposal on how to gain MSPs is this: Mages and clerics earn MSPs equivalent to the spell level they can cast at their level. So a 4th-level character gets two MSPs because he or she can now cast 2nd-level spells. At fifth level, the character earns three MSPs because he or she can now cast 3rd-level spells.

The number of MSPs a spellcaster earns is modified by Intelligence or Wisdom. An Intelligence or Wisdom score of 16 earns an additional 1 MSP. A 17 score earns 2 MSPs, and so on.

Other character classes that can cast spells, like paladins and rangers, also earn MSPs at the same rate as wizards and clerics. However, once they reach the maximum spell level they can cast, that is the only increase they receive per level. So a high-level paladin or ranger earns 3 or 4 MSPs, compared to high-level mages and clerics who earn a minimum of 9 and 7 MSPs respectively.

Arnold Arenas
Manila, Philippines

Spells Run Amok

I have felt for some time now that the spell system for the AD&D game has gotten out of hand. The recent discussion concerning the school placement of *burning hands* (Alteration or Evocation) is one such example. In this instance, some individuals have been bogged down by the name itself which would indicate that the hands of the caster actually change. Without changing the description, but changing the name to

fan of flames for example, it becomes a moot point and the spell is obviously an Evocation spell. If *burning hands* is an Alteration spell because it comes forth from the fingers, then *fireball* would have to be an Alteration spell as well because it shoots forth from a finger. It might seem a petty point, but it did appear in "Forum."

The cleric spell list and the wizard spell list should be merged into one. This might seem drastic, but think about it. It seems that originally the lists developed independently because clerical magic was patterned after religious miracles like healing, curing the sick, granting sight to the blind, walking on water, parting water, creating food, raising the dead, flames from the heavens, and so forth. It would seem to make more sense if magic on each world had one source, and deities granted (or channeled) spells that they themselves knew and preferred. Many of the spells from each list are similar anyway, and some are virtually identical. All that would really be required would be to choose spheres for existing spells and to transfer spells that have been traditionally clerical only into the new list. If anyone feels that this would make one of the two classes more powerful somehow, try it first; you'll be surprised. The way spells are acquired and cast still keeps the two classes separate and unique.

I would also like to see the total number of spells reduced. Take, for example, detection spells. Over the years I have seen quite a few. Why not just have one spell called *detection* that detects magic, illusion, poison, or whatever specific thing the caster wants to find? The thing being detected would be stated with the initial casting of the spell, and that is the only thing that can be detected for the spell's duration. The same could be done with the many magical walls and other similar groups of spells. A wizard with an 18 Intelligence can only know 18 spells per level. It seems absurd to have so many spells that cannot be learned. Do not get me wrong; I still believe that wizards could still try to create new spells, but the system itself does not need to be flooded with them.

There are a number of changes I would like to see in the management of

spellcasting, but here are just a few that I feel are the most needed.

Choosing which spells to cast at the beginning of each day has always bothered me. There are times in the past I can remember when parties were devastated solely because a cleric or wizard accidentally chose the wrong spells to carry that day. Clerics especially should always be able to pray for their spells as needed. It is still up to that character's deity whether or not the spell is granted, and the cleric should still be limited to a certain number of spells per spell level per day. Likewise wizards should be able to cast a known spell at any time within the same limitations. I know groups that

By the book, an 8-point sword cut is an 8-point sword cut. It doesn't matter whether it landed on a 10th-level fighter or a 3rd-level mage. A cut is a cut. As adventurers go up in levels, their tolerance for pain also increases. While a common person might take that proverbial cut for 8 points of damage and go into shock and die, an experienced fighter is able to look at it, say to himself, "it's only a flesh wound," and fight on. The body does not heal from the wound any faster.

The problem with adding a Constitution bonus to the healing rate is one of proportions. Does a person with a 16 Constitution really heal twice as fast as

The cleric spell list and the wizard spell list should be merged into one.

have been doing this all along with no negative effect on game balance. We would just like to see it finally official.

Lastly, I'll mention the use of spell points. People seem either to love or hate the idea. Again, the groups I've been involved with have been using them for quite some time with no negative effect on game balance, and they have increased in the usefulness of 1st-level clerics and wizards. Wizards start with a number of points equal to the number of bonus nonweapon proficiencies given for Intelligence, and for each level thereafter they gain three additional spell points. Clerics begin the same except that they base their number of bonus spells on Wisdom rather than Intelligence. Each spell costs the same as its spell level, so a 3rd-level *fireball* spell costs three spell points.

Rob Willey
Antelope, CA

Hitting the Point

In issue #261, Jack Pitsker asked why it takes so much longer for a 10th-level fighter to recover from a nearly fatal wound than it does for a 1st-level fighter. I wish he had posed that question to Skip Williams, as I'm confident he would have gotten a very good answer for it. As it stands, perhaps he'll settle for mine.

one with a 15? I'm sure creative DMs might come up with some complex chart stating something to the effect that for every point of Constitution over 16, a character heals one extra point every 3 days.

Rules for healing under a physician's care are outlined in the *MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH™* boxed set. Of course, if a character needs healing in a hurry, he or she should hire a cleric. A 10th-level fighter should be able to afford a *heal* spell. Another, less realistic option is for the DM to institute a rule saying that characters heal 1 point of damage per level for each day of complete rest. This allows for proportional healing, and it takes just as long for a 1st-level fighter to heal from a nearly fatal wound as it would a 10th-level fighter.

Carl Rossi
Ft. Hood, TX

It's What You Make It

I get a little disgruntled when I hear people complaining about the AD&D game, whether it is the hit point system, the *PLAYER'S OPTION®* books, the Armor Class system, or anything else that troubles them. We must remember that it was AD&D that first taught us gamers to modify the game as we went along remember? And this is what I and my closest friends have

done—enjoy changes we made over eight years ago and continue to play with today.

Firstly, I love the heroic feel of the game, but the hit point system lacks realism to me (such as when a 10th-level fighter falls from a cliff and walks away smiling). But to rid the game of hit points is to destroy the heroic flavor, so a simple modification cures the problem. I use two stats: One is hit points (or "dodge points" as I call them), and the other is body points, equal to the character's Constitution score. For a 0-level people like villagers, body points (BP for short) equal half of their Constitution scores. At 1st-level, characters gain the ability to apply their entire Constitution as BPs. (Please note this solves the problem of mages dying so easily at 1st-level.) Now at all levels after first, hit points are rolled normally. These are dodge points, and damage is subtracted

adding the normal modifiers to it. The changes we made affect only magical weapons and their bonuses to initiative. We found it unfair that weapons deducted their magical pluses from the initiative, thereby gaining a huge advantage over spellcasters, whose casting times mostly increase with level, whereas the fighters seem to get faster and faster. We dropped the initiative bonus completely at first, but after a while it seemed a bit unfair for the fighters that they didn't improve in that aspect. The solution came by deducting 1 point of initiative for each 2 full points of magical pluses of the weapon. This seems logical since the attack roll modified by the pluses is raised by 5% per plus, whereas the initiative is sped up by 10% per plus, because initiative is rolled with a ten-sided die and not a twenty-sided die, as is the attack roll.

a 17) both tried and failed to lift the cage (using the Bend Bars/Lift Gates rolls for their Strengths). The thief and priest (each with a 15 Strength) also tried and failed. So that left the mage, with his strapping 9 Strength and 1 percent chance.

The player rolled the dice right in front of all of the players and myself, and amazingly enough he rolled a 1—managing to lift the cage to waist level. The others didn't think to help him hold up the cage or shove something large underneath to keep it up. The thief and one of the fighters just quickly slid out.

I made the player of the wizard make a Constitution check to see whether he could keep holding the cage up, hoping someone would get the idea and help him. No one did (the paladin and priest scurrying under the cage to freedom themselves), and he failed the Constitution check. The player asked whether he could make another Bend Bard/Lift Gates check to see if he could hold the cage up long enough to get out himself before it fell to the ground. I told him that if he made another roll of 1 on a d100, we would say that he managed to lift the cage over his head, and I was confident he would fail. Again, in front of everyone at the table, he rolled a 1.

So the weak and scrawny little wizard picked up a cage weighing hundreds of pounds that no one else in the party could budge, held it long enough for the others to escape, and then proceeded to walk out upright before dropping it to the ground.

Later that same day, he managed to bash down a door with his impressive Open Doors roll after the thief failed to pick the lock. Everyone in the party soon came to respect the obviously magical strength of the wizard. For the rest of the campaign, the paladin would always ask the wizard whether he wanted to kick down the door or pry open the chest before having the fighter take a shot. The wizard's player always (wisely) declined, however.

Michael P. Kellam
Dallas, TX

To rid the game of hit points is to destroy the heroic flavor.

from these before it gets to the body points. There are a few exceptions to this rule, and these are used for both game balance and realism purposes. They are as follows:

Whenever damage is dealt to a character in a traumatic event such as a powerful spell, a fall from a height, or a dragon's breath, the damage is calculated as 1 BP per die of damage dealt, and the rest of the damage is applied to the dodge points. This makes for a deadlier game, and I recommend using the "Hovering at Death's Door" rule in the standard system.

Thanks for your time, keep those great issues coming, and I look forward to the new and insightful ideas that will be presented when the 3rd Edition comes out.

H. Andrew Thompson
Des Moines, IA

Who Goes First?

Our playing group made some changes to the initiative system. It is basically unchanged; the players still roll a ten-sided die for initiative,

Another small change made by our group is to limit damage bonuses to the size of the die the damage is rolled with; thus a dagger can never deal out more than 1d4+4 points of damage, and a longsword never more than 1d8+8 points of damage. This change was necessary since the high-level fighters in our old (since retired) party were not particularly interested in what they rolled for damage because their fixed damage bonus was high enough to always achieve a superb result.

Martin Rosenkranz
Bonn, Germany

Amazing Dice Stories

The most remarkable series of die rolls I have ever seen in a single game session involved a lowly 3rd-level fire elementalist wizard. The wizard found himself trapped, along with the rest of the party, within a heavy metal cage that had fallen on them when they triggered a trap.

Both the party's warriors (a fighter with an 18+ Strength and a paladin with

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Dungeonecraft

By Ray Winninger

"Dungeonecraft" is a column devoted to exploring the fine art of Dungeon Mastering. Over the past nine installments, we've examined the process of developing an AD&D® campaign from scratch. So far, we've constructed the basic framework of a fantasy world, mapped a home base, and built some interesting NPCs. Along the way, we've gathered a series of special guidelines that form the cornerstones of good dungeonecraft.

This month, let's begin mapping the outdoor environment for the PCs to explore over the first three or four months of play. Our goal is to create an interesting, expansive space that gives the PCs plenty to do without straying too far from the base of operations (from *DRAGON® Magazine* issues #260–261).

Before putting pen to paper, we have some thinking to do. First on our agenda is some careful consideration of the important issue of scale. How much area should this map cover? Ten miles? Fifty miles? Five hundred? Before answering that question, consider these goals:

1. Start With the Familiar

This first outdoor map should detail the chunk of the gameworld that is intimately familiar to the player characters when the campaign begins. In other words, most buildings, locales, or towns known to the player characters or visited

by the PCs prior to the beginning of play should be depicted on this map. Such a map should go a long way toward helping you answer questions about these locales during play. Achieving this goal might seem like a tall order. After all, if any of you were to make a map depicting all the places you've visited, it might span several hundred (or even several thousand) miles. In the Middle Ages, though, it was common for the average citizen to spend the whole of his or her life within 20 miles of home. The only forms of relatively fast transportation that existed at the time (horses and sailing ships) were well beyond the means of most citizens.

2. Include the Unknown

The AD&D game is about exploration. As a consequence, this first map should cover plenty of unfamiliar territory for the PCs to explore. As a general rule, the familiar territory should occupy no more than 25% of this first map. The PCs should have only a vague idea as to what lies in the remaining 75%.

3. Plan Ahead for Adventures

Your first outdoor map should house enough interesting details to keep the players occupied for several months of play. You'll soon learn that drawing one of these maps is a lot of work, and since

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you'll have plenty of other tasks to occupy your time as your campaign gets off the ground, you'll want to make sure that you won't have to draw another one for some time. In practice, this means that you should sprinkle your map with interesting locations and possible adventure sites. These sites should be placed far enough apart that it takes the PCs some time to find and explore them all.

Combining the Three Goals

Together, these first three guidelines suggest that the first map should cover a radius of approximately 60 miles. This means that it takes the adventurers about three days to cross your entire map location on horseback and approximately a week to cross it on foot. Most of your locations lie two or three full days of travel apart, which should work out just about right. At this distance, you can focus on the journeys that take place between the various adventures as much or as little as you like, allowing you to control the pace of the campaign. Across two days of travel, it's equally plausible that the players experience several encounters en route or none at all.

If we presume that our map fills a half sheet of paper and covers a roughly circular area with a radius of 60 miles, its scale works out to about 15 miles per

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inch. This scale offers plenty of space to depict towns, roads, and other relevant features on the map.

Now that we've decided upon a scale, let's look at the individual characteristics of a good small-area map.

Boundaries

One of our goals, remember, is to keep the adventurers more or less confined to this first map for several months. As a consequence, we should think about how to surround the fringes of the map with natural barriers or other obstacles that make it a challenge to leave the area. We must be careful here; we don't want the players to feel like they're imprisoned. Our boundaries should be as subtle and formidable as possible.

Some of our options are obvious: impassable mountains, deep seas, and thick forests; but there are plenty of other, more creative possibilities. Fear can serve as an excellent boundary. Suppose that the only trail leading off the map to the east is known to cross a long-abandoned cemetery that is home to hordes of undead. Or what if the lands that lie just beyond one edge of the map are controlled by an enemy state known to imprison trespassers?

Lack of amenities and motivation are other strong possibilities. Suppose there are no obvious sources of fresh water for several days' travel in one direction. To cross this barrier, the players must either locate hidden water sources or acquire the resources necessary to outfit an expedition large enough to carry several weeks' worth of water. Many game months are likely to pass before the players are in a position to explore either possibility.

Similarly, you can often prevent the players from traveling in a given direction simply by giving them a strong reason to believe that nothing of interest lies in that direction. Why, for instance, would the PCs venture out into the middle of a vast desert said to be devoid of life? Of course, you can always change their beliefs later, when you're ready for them to move on. Perhaps they learn there is a hidden city in the middle of the desert that appears only at sunrise and sunset each day.

In the AD&D game, you can even call upon supernatural or otherworldly

means of keeping your players in check. Perhaps a strange caustic mist permeates one border of your map and wreaks havoc upon anyone who ventures inside. No one knows the origin of the mysterious mist or what lies beyond it. (Sounds like a great opportunity for a future adventure.)



Alternatively, in a more whimsical fantasy world, perhaps your starting map consists of a small valley that rests beneath a ring of tall, sheer cliffs. The only way out of the valley is to pay an enormous giant 1,000 gold pieces to lift you up and over the rim. It should take some time before the PCs accumulate enough wealth to get the whole party out.

Of course, the best strategy is to erect a series of boundaries that employ a combination of all these methods. In the world of Aris, high, forested mountains, nearly impassable without the aid of a skilled guide, close off a couple of flanks. Sparsely populated forests seal off another border. Until they can obtain the appropriate magic (*create food and water*

spells, for instance) or secure the financing necessary to mount a large expedition, PCs won't be able to carry enough supplies to go too far in this direction. Yet another approach is sealed off by a series of formidable humanoid strongholds. It will be quite some time before the PCs are mighty enough to fight their way past these encampments. The final approach is bordered by the "wandering forest" first described in *DRAGON Magazine* #256. This forest is secretly populated by a large tribe of treants who continuously move from place to place, shifting the location of the trails that cut through their domain. Most travelers who enter these woods become hopelessly lost.

Wilderness and Non-Wilderness Areas

In most AD&D campaigns, the players spend the bulk of their time on just two activities: adventuring and planning. You should accommodate them by making sure there is terrain appropriate to both activities on your area map. In essence, this means that you should make sure that your area map contains both tame, civilized areas and wild, unsettled areas. The former territory makes an ideal retreat during the planning phases of the campaign. By adding it to your map, you guarantee that the players have a haven where they can feel safe. The wilderness areas, on the other hand, give the players something to explore and provide a nice venue for their daring exploits.

Perhaps the most important reason to include both types of terrain on your area map, however, is to facilitate adventuring. Later, when you begin to devise adventures, you'll find that some of your adventure concepts require a wild setting, while others require a civilized setting. Exploring an undiscovered ancient ruin and seeking the lair of a fearsome monster are both good examples of the former. Helping a merchant outwit his crooked rival and hunting down a vampire terrorizing local barmaids are good illustrations of the latter. Giving yourself the flexibility necessary to run a wide variety of adventures in the area covered by this first map makes it a lot easier to keep the players comfortably confined to this area for as long as possible.

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Dear Dungeonecraft

A couple of my players complain when I roll the dice behind my DM's screen. According to them, it's against the rules for the DM to make attack or damage rolls in secret. When I asked where they saw this rule, one of the players mentioned an article in an old issue of *DRAGON Magazine*. What are they talking about? Why can't I roll the dice any way I see fit?

—Puzzled in Petersburg

Dear Puzzled,

The quick answer to your question is: Yes, of course you can roll your dice in secret if you like. Even if this article exists, it's irrelevant. The real issue is whether secret dice rolling is a good idea. On the one hand, rolling in secret allows you to hide information from the players. An observant player might be able to figure out exactly what sort of monster he's facing by carefully studying the creature's attack and damage rolls, for example. On the other hand, rolling the dice in the open provides a certain edge-of-your-seat drama to the game. There's nothing like the tension that mounts when a hero who is down to his last few hit points is forced to watch that die slowly roll across the table.

My own rules of thumb are:

1. When the players won't immediately understand the outcome of a roll, roll the dice in secret. In other words, if you decide that there is a 20% chance the rickety bridge will give way beneath the players, or if you're making a secret saving throw for a character against a spell of which he or she is unaware, there's no reason to roll the dice in the open. If they can't understand the impact of the roll or why you are rolling, the roll will only confuse them.

2. When the players aren't sure what adversary they are facing or what their adversary's exact capabilities are, always roll the dice in secret. Normally, this means the first time the players fight a new monster or NPC, you should use secret rolls. If it's a climactic fight against a new monster or NPC, make secret rolls for the first few rounds, but switch to open rolls in the later rounds to increase the drama.

3. If neither of the first two rules apply, always roll the dice in the open. It's usually more fun that way.

Note that these civilized and wilderness areas don't necessarily equate to the known and unknown areas mentioned earlier. You can certainly include civilized areas that are unfamiliar to the PCs on your initial map, just as you can include wilderness areas they know well.

The civilized areas on the Aris campaign map consist of the Ironoak stronghold, its immediate surroundings, and the area surrounding a small town located about two days' travel from Ironoak. Although much of the intervening land is wilderness, at least a couple of the PCs have grown up in the area and are familiar with this terrain.

Variety

Adventuring over the same ground can grow stale quickly. Try to depict a wide variety of terrain types on your initial area map. This gives you a lot of options when deciding where to set your adventures, as well as the opportunity to throw a variety of challenges at the players as the campaign progresses. Maybe a mountain climbing adventure would be fun, or an adventure in which the players must cross a great sea or a burning desert. Most importantly, a wide variety of terrain types in your initial starting area allows you to make use of a wide variety of monsters. The PCs aren't likely to encounter a hill giant when there aren't any hills within a hundred miles.

Of course, this doesn't mean your terrain placement doesn't have to make sense. A tropical jungle just a few miles away from a desert isn't plausible. Try to observe the basic rules of geography. For example, mountains are usually surrounded by foothills, and dense forests are usually found along the coast or near a major river.

Since the Aris campaign is set on a forest world, variety is a bit of a challenge. We can solve this problem by varying the terrain that lies beneath the forests (forested hills, forested mountains, arctic forests, and so on), the types of trees that comprise the forests, and the density of the forest clusters. We'll also invent some exotic tree types to provide the players with new and unexpected terrain to explore: trees that secrete poison

from their leaves, trees covered with dangerous thorns, and forests that grow a canopy so thick it blocks all sunlight from overhead.

Next month, we'll continue to review the key goals to creating a good local map and address strategies for drawing the map itself.

Ray Winninger is an author and game designer. He enjoys reading your letters, so keep them coming!

no.
4

SOLUTION

The dragons' preferences can be deduced in this manner:

- 1 The white dragon head either hates multiples of 3 or multiples of 5. Either way, it hates the number 45.
- 2 Therefore, the green dragon head hates prime numbers (as 45 is a multiple of both 3 and 5).
- 3 Therefore, the red dragon head hates even numbers (as 57 is not a prime number).
- 4 Therefore, the blue dragon head hates perfect squares (as 18 is even).
- 5 Therefore, the black dragon head hates numbers with two of the same digit (as 8 is not a perfect square).
- 6 Therefore, the white dragon head hates numbers divisible by 3 (as 24 has two different digits).

The answer is door #35. The other 63 numbers are eliminated by the dragons' preferences. On the door layout below, the doors are eliminated in the order of the clues in the puzzle, with each dragon's color indicating any door it eliminates (doors are only eliminated once). The gold 35 remains.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
28	29	30	31	32	33	34	9
27	48	49	50	51	52	35	10
26	47	60	61	62	53	36	11
25	46	59	64	63	54	37	12
24	45	58	57	56	55	38	13
23	44	43	42	41	40	39	14
22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15

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Sage Advice



By Skip Williams

This month, the Sage looks into monsters, spells, and various optional rules for the AD&D® game.

The *MONSTROUS MANUAL*® tome entries for birds, mammals, fish, and humans don't include frequency, climate, or terrain information. Where can I find this information?

This information isn't published anywhere. For humans and noncarnivorous animals, the frequency rating is usually

When in doubt, consult any good encyclopedia.

Common. Larger or more unusual animals probably have Uncommon frequency, and predatory animals will be Rare or Very Rare.

The climate entry should usually be Any Land or Any Non-Arctic Land, but keep on the lookout for obvious exceptions (such as fish). In any case, only fairly mundane creatures received the kind of abbreviated treatment you've noticed here, so when in doubt, consult any good encyclopedia.

The monster description for the dracolich says that attacks against the creature receive no attack or damage bonuses. Which bonuses don't apply? What about magical items that are specifically made to affect undead?

Which of the following combat bonuses would still apply when fighting a dracolich? Strength, weapon specialization, elven bonuses for swords and bows, a magical weapon, a flametongue sword, a *bless* spell, a *prayer* spell, *oil of sharpness*, an *aid* spell, a *helm of brilliance*, a *sword of dragon slaying*.

No attack or damage bonuses of any kind apply against a dracolich, including all the bonuses you have listed.

The *Spells & Magic* book gives spell-casting levels for various creatures that have spell-like abilities. For example, a pit fiend casts all of its spell-like abilities at 20th level. Does that mean that spells like *fireball* (which a pit fiend can use as a spell-like ability) that normally have their own level limits (10th in this case) use the creature's own casting level instead?

Any limits the spell carries still apply unless the creature description specifically says otherwise.

Note that a *fireball* has a limit of 10 dice of damage, not a limit of 10th-level casting. In the case of a pit fiend, a *fireball* spell inflicts only 10d6 points of damage, but it has a range of 210 yards, just as it does for any other 20th-level caster.

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The Sage cannot make personal replies; please include no SASE with your questions.

I'm confused by the weapon type vs. armor modifiers optional rule (Table 52 in the *Player's Handbook*). Do you apply the modifiers to the defender's Armor Class or to the attacker's attack roll?

According to the text accompanying the table, apply all the modifiers to the attacker's THAC0. Negative modifiers lower THAC0, making the target easier to hit. Positive modifiers raise THAC0, making the target more difficult to hit.

Does the saving throw for a damaging spell happen before or after applying the damage reduction from a spell like *protection from lightning* or *protection from fire*?

Roll the saving throw first, then apply the damage reduction.

Could a psionicist use the *empower* ability (from the *Complete Psionics Handbook*) on a very large object—for instance, a building?

As long as the building meets the requirements for being empowered (it must be new and worth 2.5 to 5 times its normal cost), it can be considered an object and be empowered. Many DMs might not want to consider buildings "objects" for purposes of this power. (For such DMs, I recommend a size limit, perhaps a 10' cube.)

Are there any special effects when a character uses the psionic residue power (from *Dragon Kings*) on the

Astral plane? If a character has the ability to travel between planes, what happens if he or she goes to all three planes where the residue exists?

A character using the psionic residue powers gains 1/10th of the PSPs he or she expended during the previous 5 rounds. A psionicist who has absorbed this limit cannot absorb any more PSPs from the same time period, even if visiting all three affected planes.

Can characters of any class use the advanced martial arts rules from the Complete Ninja's Handbook, or just fighters? Also, what types of proficiency slots do you have to spend on special maneuvers? Page 42 says you can spend either weapon or non-weapon proficiency slots to learn a style, but page 44 says you must spend a weapon proficiency slot to learn a special maneuver.

Any character who meets the requirements (knows basic martial arts, finds a master, spends a month in training, and has a proficiency slot to spend) can learn an advanced martial art.

Characters can spend either weapon or nonweapon proficiency slots to learn styles, but it takes a weapon proficiency slot to learn a special maneuver.

When using the Combat & Tactics rules, how do I determine the melee reach of natural attacks for very big creatures, such as a hydra's bite, a giant's fists, or a troll's claws? What happens when these creatures use weapons? Also, what happens if these creatures have tail attacks? Can such creatures attack behind them? What is the range of the tail attack?

Large creatures have a melee reach of 1, huge creatures have a reach of 2, and gargantuan creatures have a reach of 3. If these big creatures use weapons, add their "natural" reach to the weapon's reach.

Unless the creature's description specifically indicates that the creature can attack to the rear with its tail, it can attack only to the front. In any case, reach is the same as the reach for the creature's other attacks.

If the creature can use its tail to attack behind it, measure the reach for any attack it makes from the creature's

rear—even when it attacks to its front. Also apply a -2 attack penalty if the creature reaches over itself (or another creature) to deliver an attack.

The revised version of the symbol spell that appears in the Wizard's Spell Compendium, Volume IV mentions a symbol of spell loss, yet this particular symbol does not appear anywhere in the description of the spell. What are the effects of a symbol of spell loss?

The text was accidentally dropped from the book, here it is:

Spell Loss: Any creature within the radius immediately loses 1d4 spells from

Just how powerful is a pixie player character's polymorphing ability?

memory. The DM should determine which spells are lost randomly. Creatures with no memorized spells are unaffected. Creatures that have some memorized spells, but not enough to satisfy the loss, suffer no effect beyond the loss of all memorized spells. This symbol must be carefully inscribed.

The Requiem: The Grim Harvest boxed set has rules for creating undead PCs but doesn't say anything about their Armor Class. Do Undead PCs use the Armor Class listed in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* tome for their undead type, do they have a base AC 10, or do they have some other Armor Class number?

Undead PCs have AC 10, which is subject to armor, Dexterity, and magical protection.

The Domains of Dread book implies that sufficiently advanced domains have discovered and used gunpowder. *Champions of the Mists*, however, states that the RAVENLOFT® setting uses smokepowder, the magical substitute for gunpowder. So which is it, gunpowder or smokepowder?

Smokepowder.

If your paladins are traveling far from their church—or any other church, for that matter—how do you handle tithing? Some of my campaigns take the PCs to far away lands, and they do

not return for a very long time. I would hate to have to tell my paladins that they had to haul around all of this treasure just so they can tithe. What do you suggest?

If there is a branch of your paladins' church nearby, they can tithe there. If not, the paladins should set aside tithe money (converting it to a portable form is OK) until they can make a proper tithe. If the paladins find a worthy cause to support with their tithe money (perhaps establishing their own local branch of the church), they can use their tithe money for that. The DM and players

must work out such arrangements on a case-by-case basis.

In the Complete Book of Humanoids, the kit for saurial paladins on page 69 says the paladin can turn undead and cast cleric spells, yet on page 70, under Special Hindrances, it says that they cannot turn undead or use clerical spells, which is correct?

You have an older version of the book. (The discrepancy has been corrected in later printings.) The text on page 70 is correct. A saurial paladin's benefits are:

- +2 saving throw bonus
- Immune to disease
- Lay on hands (heal 2 points of damage per level per day)
- *Cure disease* once per 5 levels per week

Just how powerful is a pixie player character's polymorphing ability? Can you play a pixie and polymorph at will into a dragon when faced with combat? Will the dragon be full sized? Or will it be a mere 27"-42" long?

This ability works just like the 4th-level wizard spell *polymorph self*, which does not allow the user to assume any huge or gargantuan form, nor does it grant anything like a dragon's combat ability. (See the spell description in the *Player's Handbook*.) In the case of the pixie, you might want to discard the *polymorph self* spell's size limits (anything from the size of a wren to the size

of a hippopotamus) and instead specify any tiny, small, or human-sized form.

In the book *Warriors and Priests of the Realms*, the benefit of being a warrior of the Elven Court is a full suit of custom made chainmail. What properties does this mail have?

The special armor is nonmagical elven chainmail as described in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*.

The effect created by a *Bigby's grasping hand* spell can be anywhere from 5 feet to 21 feet tall, and it automatically immobilizes opponents weighing less

than 1,000 pounds. My players insist that human-sized opponents weighing less than 1,000 pounds are totally unable to move or defend themselves when grasped by the *hand* and are therefore helpless opponents subject to the instant kill rules. I have ruled that creatures immobilized by the *hand* can be attacked with a +4 bonus (with Armor Class calculated from armor value and magical bonuses only), provided they are greater than 5 feet tall. For opponents less than 5 feet tall, the player characters must find some way to damage the opponent without destroying the *hand* grasping the opponent. What do you think?

I think you've made a great ruling. In this case, "immobile" does not mean "helpless."

Most of the *Bigby's hand* spells can sustain damage equal to the hit points of the caster before being destroyed. I don't recall an Armor Class for these spell effects being mentioned, nor any discussion of what attack forms can affect them. Could you provide some direction?

The various *hand* effects have AC 0 (see spell descriptions). They suffer damage as creatures but cannot be stunned or poisoned. Most magical effects that don't cause damage do not affect them; however, a *disintegrate* spell or a successful *dispel magic* spell destroys them. A *Bigby's hand* cannot push through a *wall of force* or enter an *antimagic shell*. It suffers damage from the red, orange, and yellow layers of a *prismatic wall* or *prismatic sphere*, but it cannot be poisoned, petrified, driven insane, or forced to another plane by the other layers (but it also cannot penetrate the violet layer). A *Bigby's hand* makes saving throws as its caster.

Is it possible for an unconscious character to benefit from a *ring of vampiric regeneration*? Suppose the *ring* wearer is at -5 hit points and unconscious, so a comrade takes the unconscious character's *hand*, places a dagger in it, and stabs an enemy. Would the *ring* wearer gain any hit points from the attack?

No. The *ring* wearer must strike an opponent by his or her own volition and deal damage to gain hit points.

Duo-Dimension Dilemma

Does the *duo-dimension* spell require the user to suffer double damage from all attacks when positioned so that he or she is not perfectly aligned to an attacker? What happens when the user is subjected to an area of effect, such as a *fireball*? Who can detect the user when he or she is turned so as to be invisible? Since the spell displaces part of the user to the Astral Plane, how do you deal with the subjective time effects of that plane? Isn't the material component cost for this spell (a flat likeness of the caster worth 500 to 1,000 gp) a little steep?

When a *duo-dimension* spell is running, the user just plain doesn't exist from the point of view of anyone or anything to the user's right or left. On a square grid, this "non existence" starts with the squares immediately to the left and right and spreads out from there, like so:

*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
-	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
-	-	*	*	*	-	-	-
-	-	-	C	-	-	-	-
-	-	*	*	*	-	-	-
-	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

C = the character

- = places from which the character effectively does not exist.

Note that this is only a 7 ¥ 9 grid. The zones of nonexistence extend indefinitely.

Nothing can affect the *duo-dimension* user if it originates in one of the - spaces, including melee attacks, missile attacks, and spells. Even *fireball* blasts do not affect the character if the detonation takes place in a - square. The character suffers double damage from any attack originating from a * square.

A *true seeing* spell allows the caster to detect the character, no matter where it is cast, but a *detect invisibility* spell fails to detect the character if the caster is standing in a - square.

Ignore subjective time effects unless the spell actually causes the user to enter the Astral Plane fully.

If you still think the spell is too pricey, treat the flat likeness as a focus, not a component. The focus is necessary for the spell but is not consumed in the cast-



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Can the 6th-level wizard spell *demi-shadow magic* duplicate spells such as *wall of force*, *wall of iron*, or *wall of stone*? *Demishadow magic* can duplicate Evocation spells of 4th- or 5th-level, and these spells are the right school and the right level.

Demishadow magic can duplicate only a spell with a visible effect and a finite duration, which rules out all the spells on your list.

The area of effect listed for the 3rd-level priest spell *stone shape* is not very clear. The spell description says the area of effect is a 3' cube plus a 1' cube/level. Does that mean a 5th-level priest can shape an 8' cube? Or is it a 3' cube with five 1' cubes stacked on it?

The latter is correct. A 5th-level priest can affect fourteen 1' cubes (nine 1' cubes, plus five more 1' cubes).

Are multi-classed PCs awarded the 10% bonus to experience points based on ability scores the way single-classed characters are?

Yes. Divide any XP award the character receives among the character's classes as normal, than add the 10% bonus XP to each subtotal for any class in which the character qualifies for the bonus (that is, has high enough ability scores in the prime requisites for the class). For example, a fighter/mage has a Strength score of 14 and an Intelligence score of 17. The character is eligible for the 10% bonus only for the mage class. If the character earns 1,000 XP, the award is divided in half, 500 XP for fighter and 500 XP for mage. However, the character gains 550 XP for the mage class thanks to the 10% bonus.

Exactly which plane is the subject of a *wraithform* spell on when the spell is in effect? If the subject is on the Ethereal Plane, why must he or she find a crack or hole in a barrier to pass through it? Also, do undead even realize the subject is alive, or do they invariably think the subject is an undead creature?

The *wraithform* user does not leave the plane he or she is on when receiving the spell, though *wraithform* users on the Prime Material can reach into (and be reached from) the Border Ethereal—see the spell description.

Undead creatures who encounter the *wraithform* user perceive the character as a wraith or spectre only if the undead have no reason to believe otherwise. Unintelligent undead never figure out the user's true nature. (If unintelligent undead have a reason to be hostile to the character, they probably attack even if they perceive the character to be a fellow undead creature). Likewise, intelligent undead are never fooled if they see the user in normal form and then witness the spell taking effect. Powerful intelligent undead, such as liches, gain a saving throw vs. spell at a -4 penalty to recognize a *wraithform* effect even if they have no reason to suspect that the user is not an undead creature.

Under the *Combat & Tactics* rules, is it possible to defeat an undead creature with martial arts attacks? For example, martial arts attacks are pummeling attacks, which inflict $\frac{1}{2}$ temporary damage and $\frac{1}{4}$ actual damage. Could an undead creature eventually succumb to that $\frac{1}{4}$ actual damage?

Undead are immune to pummeling attacks (including all forms of martial arts) as the *Combat & Tactics* rules are currently written. You might want to consider a house rule that changes that a little, such as this one:

A martial arts specialist or master can strike without causing an attack of opportunity and can inflict either lethal or subdual damage. When inflicting lethal damage, a martial arts attack counts as a blunt attack; such attacks can affect any creature that can be harmed by nonmagical blunt weapons.

This rule can help make martial arts a more viable option for adventuring than the original rule allowed. Note that the reason undead are immune to pummeling attacks in *Combat & Tactics* is that you cannot knock them out. If you allow skilled martial artists to cause lethal damage, then the damage they inflict is just as destructive to undead creatures as a mace, staff, or other blunt weapon.

*Skip Williams is the co-author of the *Combat & Tactics* rulebook and would never think of playing the AD&D game without miniature figures, especially his infamous "bag of death"—a cloth tote bag stuffed with a horde of wiggly rubber monsters.*

SHOP KEEP

by
JOHN
KOVALIC

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ooo! ooo! oooo! GREAT! SO WE KEEP THE 1D6 OUTS PER INNING, DITCH THE FARM IMPLEMENTS, AND COME UP WITH A RANDOM OUTFIELDER ENCOUNTER TABLE!

THE GAME OF SOFTBALL IS NOT OPEN TO HOUSE RULES!

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OK... NOW LET'S SAY THIRD BASE REPRESENTS A WARP PORTAL ...

KOVALIC

COUNTDOWN

Last month we promised to share another

Here are **TEN** secrets!

DRAGON MAGAZINE is proud to present, courtesy of Vice President Ryan Dancey, ten simple rules you can use in your current game. With one exception, they aren't exactly like the new rule, but they're close enough to give you a sense for where the game is headed.

Oh, and don't think these are the only changes to appear in 3rd Edition. We don't want to spoil all the surprises so soon.

1 Armor Class

Recalculate Armor Class so that the value goes up instead of down. To do so, just invert all adjustments to AC. Dexterity adjustments become plusses, not minuses, for example. The first couple of times you do this, you might feel kind of silly. However, in short order you'll probably be able to do the conversion on the fly without a second thought. When you roll to hit, the total of the final roll modified by all applicable values is the AC that you hit. If your roll is equal to or greater than the AC of the target, the attack inflicts damage.

2 Level Limits

Ignore the published restrictions on demihuman level and class restrictions. Allow any class combination for multiclass characters provided that the alignment restrictions of all the classes are met. Allow human characters to be multiclassed. For every class taken in addition to the first, characters take a 20% penalty to all XP earned.

3 Monks & Assassins

Use the rules for monks and assassins presented in the recent GREYHAWK® supplement *The Scarlet Brotherhood* to create PCs. Monk PCs must be lawful. Assassin PCs may not be good.



The 3rd Edition updates not only the rules but also the look of the D&D® game. Watch these pages for more on the new style.

TO THIRD EDITION

11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

rd Edition secret with you in this issue. Well, we changed our minds.

4 Character Creation
When rolling up stats for new characters, have each player roll 4d6 and keep the best three dice. Repeat the process six times. When complete, players can assign the final six totals to the six ability scores as they see fit.

5 Exceptional Strength
Treat the exceptional Strength entries as integers over 18. The first percentile category therefore becomes "19," the second "20," and so forth. Then recalculate the existing Strength values on the table from 19 and up to reflect the change. Be sure to track that change for things like the *gauntlets of ogre power* and monsters with exceptional Strength.

6 Initiative
Have participants in combat roll initiative only at the beginning of the combat. During a combat round, participants may take the "Refocus" action which allows them to move first in the next and all subsequent rounds, or the "Delay" action, which allows them to move last in the next and all subsequent rounds. Both of those actions are the only thing one can do during the round the actions are taken. As always, when two or more PCs or NPCs share the same initiative, their actions are considered to be simultaneous.

7 Combat Rounds
Use a six-second combat round. To do so, divide all time-dependant information (such as spell duration, and movement rates) by 10, unless the information states a time in rounds or turns in which case leave the time unchanged. All spells that have a casting time less than 1 round are resolved on the initiative of the caster. Spells that have a casting time longer than 1 round are resolved on the initiative of the caster the appropriate number of rounds after they are cast.



8 Spell Bonuses
Allow all spellcasting characters to use the bonus spells chart for priests. For classes that don't receive spells at 1st level but gain the ability to cast spells at higher levels, treat the first such level as "1st level" for the purposes of bonus spells from the priest chart. Substitute Intelligence (and wizard spells) for wizards and bards, and use Wisdom for paladins and rangers.

9 Critical Hits
Allow a natural 20 on a to-hit roll to be a Threat. Have the attacker roll the d20 a second time. If the second roll is successful, the attacker has scored a Critical Hit. Double the resulting damage. If the second roll fails, inflict damage normally.

10 Healing Spells
Allow a priest character to swap a previously memorized spell for the ability to heal. For each level of the swapped spell, the priest heals d8 points of damage to anyone (including the casting character). **Example:** A priest PC swaps a 4th level spell for healing. The priest then heals 4d8 hit points. All the healing must be directed at the same target. Druids can also use this ability, but paladins and rangers cannot.



Ten months and counting...

Harrowed Heroes

Skills & Powers for the RAVENLOFT® Campaign

by Ed Bonny

illustrated by Pete Venters



7V
99



Lost in the swirling

Ethereal Plane lies an oddly cobbled collection of lands known as the Demiplane of Dread, where mortal beings struggle to survive the horrors of the dark powers. Those who prevail often grow harder and darker, their spirits harrowed by their dire surroundings.

The Domains of Dread book shows how to create AD&D® game characters native to this dark demiplane. Now, for the first time, players can customize characters with Skills & Powers options created specifically for the RAVENLOFT® setting. Even if your campaign is set in another world, these special abilities add a harrowing new dimension to your AD&D game characters.

NOTE: To use the following new abilities in your game, you should have the *Player's Handbook*, *PLAYER'S OPTION: Skills & Powers*, and *Domains of Dread*. A few of the powers also refer to the *Tome of Magic*. If you use only the core rules, you can easily adapt the skills & powers to regular nonweapon proficiencies.

1. CHARACTER POINTS

Character points (CPs), first introduced in the *Skills & Powers* rulebook, let players customize their characters. The number of CPs given to a character depends on race and class. Points are expended for racial abilities, class options, and proficiencies, but they can also be spent in other ways, such as to acquire a new spell, re-roll a missed attack, or grant a second saving throw. For a complete list of ways to spend CPs, see Chapter 1 of *Skills & Powers*.

Some options allow players to impose limitations on their characters for bonus CPs, which can be spent on other abilities. Between any stages of character creation, the player may retain only 5 CPs for later use.

2. ABILITY SCORES

Once the ability scores are determined, players select a character race. Life in the unusual environments of Ravenloft's varied domains often alters the people who reside there. Players should refer to the Native Player Character section for each domain to read more on any alterations to PCs. For example, natives of the demigod Vecna's domain, Cavitus, suffer a -4 penalty to Charisma scores but roll 1d12 for hit points.

3. RACIAL REQUIREMENTS

Each PC has a specified number of CPs dependent on race. Players can spend points to customize a character from the general skill list provided for each race, or they can purchase the race's standard skill package. Ravenloft offers one unique PC race, the Half-Vistani, available in the Demiplane of Dread.

ALL RACES

Life for most inhabitants of the Demiplane of Dread is grim and uncertain.

Whether the folk of Ravenloft hail from the wastes of the Burning Peaks Cluster, the lush lands of Barovia, or the squalor of Nosos, they receive the same share of torments from the Dark Powers. In every domain, exposure to the unusual nature of the demiplane has altered the people of Ravenloft in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. Sometimes these changes are physical, but they just as easily can be changes wrought on the mind. All races may choose from the common options below:

Acceptance (5): Xenophobia is prevalent in many domains regardless of the PC's race. The PC's genuine sensitivity and understanding of this social reality aids in better dealing with the many diverse cultures of Ravenloft. The PC receives a +2 bonus to all reaction adjustment rolls.

Dark Avoidance (5): Coyly cognizant of the Dark Powers' attention, the PC gains a -1% modifier to all Power checks.

Deny Undeath (5): The character's fear of undeath has led the PC to take all precautions necessary to ensure a final, eternal rest in the event of death. These precautions are based upon the PC's superstitions, religious customs, and other rituals of which the PC has learned. As a result, the PC will never rise as an undead regardless of the manner of death.

Resist Dark Magic (5): The PC receives a +1 bonus to all saving throws vs. Necromantic magic.

Note that most racial ability references to *Domains of Dread* can also be found in the *Player's Handbook*.

DWARVES

Standard abilities: Combat Bonus, Defensive Bonus, Fearlessness, Infravision, Magic Resistance, Mining Skill, and Poison Resistance.

Appreciation (5): The dwarf has a great appreciation of finely crafted metal armor and weapons and thus can identify magical weapons and armor with a 5% chance of success per level of the PC.

Combat Bonus (5): The dwarf gains a +1 attack bonus against orcs, goblins, half-orcs, and hobgoblins.

Defensive Bonus (5): Ogres, ogre magi, trolls, giants, and titans suffer a -4 melee attack penalty against the dwarf.

Dense Skin (10): The dwarf suffers half damage from blunt weapons.

Earth Bond (5): A close connection with elemental earth enables the PC to heal at a faster rate when underground. The PC heals 2 points of damage overnight rather than 1 point.

Elemental Resistance (5/15): For 5 CPs, the dwarf gains a 5% per level magic resistance to Elemental (earth) magic. For 15 CPs, the dwarf gains a 5% per level resistance to all Elemental magic.

Fearlessness (5): Whenever the dwarf must make a Fear check not caused by a magical attack, the dwarf gains a +2 bonus to the check in addition to any Wisdom bonuses.

Greater Hit Points (10): The dwarf gains 1 additional hit point at each new level.

Infravision (5): The dwarf has infravision as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Magic Resistance (10): The dwarf receives a bonus to saving throws vs. magic as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Mining Skill (5): The dwarf has mining skills as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Overcome Penalty (10): The dwarf no longer suffers the 20% magical item malfunction penalty described in *Domains of Dread*.

Poison Resistance (10): The dwarf receives a bonus to saving throws vs. poison as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Sub-Ability Improvement (10): The dwarf gains +1 to either the Constitution Fitness or Health sub-ability score.

Stone Tell (10): The dwarf can use the *stone tell* ability once per day as a priest of the same level.

Weapon Bonus (5): The dwarf gains a +1 attack bonus with one weapon traditionally favored by dwarves: ax, crossbow, hammer, mace, pick, short sword, or warhammer.

ELVES

Standard abilities: Infravision, Iron Will, Magic Resistance, Secret Doors, Surprise Bonus, and Weapon Expertise.

Deadshot (5): The elf's deadly accuracy with the bow adds +1 to damage.

Infravision (5): The elf has infravision as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Iron Will (10): The elf has a +2 bonus to Madness checks as per *Domains of Dread*.

Magic Resistance (10): The elf has 90% magic resistance to Enchantment/Charm spells as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Necromantic Resistance (10): The elf has a 90% resistance to magic from the school of Necromancy.

Resist Undead (5): The elf gains a +1 bonus to all saving throws against special attacks from undead, such as a ghast's nauseating smell.

Secret Doors (5): The elf can detect secret doors as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Spell Ability (15): Once per day, the elf can cast *dancing lights*, *faerie fire*, and *light*. At 4th level, the elf can cast *detect magic*, *levitate*, and *alarm* once per day.

Sub-Ability Improvement (10): The elf gains +1 to either the Aim or Balance Dexterity sub-ability.

Surprise Bonus (5): The elf can Move Silently as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Undead Fighter (5): The elf gains a +1 bonus to damage when using a melee weapon vs. undead.

Weapon Expertise (5): The elf's skill grants a +1 attack bonus using any sort of straight bows (not crossbows), as described in *Domains of Dread*.

GNOSES

Standard abilities: Combat Bonus, Defense Bonus, Fearlessness, Infravision, Magic Resistance, and Mining Skill.

Combat Bonus (5): The gnome gains a +1 attack bonus against goblins and their kin as per *Domains of Dread*.

Defensive Bonus (5): The gnome is harder to hit by certain larger enemies as per *Domains of Dread*.

Fearlessness (10): The gnome gains a +2 bonus to all Horror checks as per *Domains of Dread*.

Charm and Illusion Resistant (10): The gnome has 3% resistance per level against Charm and Illusion magics.

Infravision (5): The gnome has infravision as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Magic Resistance (10): The gnome receives a bonus to saving throws vs. magic as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Mining Skill (5): The gnome has mining skills as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Overcome Penalty (10): The gnome no longer suffers the 20% magical item malfunction penalty described in *Domains of Dread*.

Potion Brewer (10): The gnome learns how to brew one of the following potions every second level, starting at 2nd level: *healing*, *speed*, *water breathing*, *rainbow hues*, *sweet water*, and *invisibility*. The gnome can brew one potion each week at a cost of $(2d4 + 2) \times 10$ gp per potion. A potion remains potent for $1d4 + 1$ days per level of the gnome. The PC must also select the Brewing nonweapon proficiency to use this ability.

Sub-Ability Improvement (10): The gnome gains +1 to either the Knowledge or Reason Intelligence sub-ability score.

Weapon Bonus (5): The gnome gains +1 to hit with a weapon of choice.

HALF-ELVES

Standard abilities: Infravision, Iron Will, Magic Resistance, and Secret Doors.

Appearance (5): The half-elf strongly resembles one parent and can pass for either an elf or a human (or, in rare cases, Vistani) in nearly any setting. Close scrutiny may reveal, however, that the PC is of mixed heritage.

Infravision (5): The half-elf has infravision as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Iron Will (5): The half-elf gains a +1 bonus to Fear and Horror checks as per *Domains of Dread*.

Magic Resistance (5/10): The half-elf is 30% resistant to Enchantment/Charm magic as per *Domains of Dread*. For 10 CPs, this resistance rises to 60%.

Necromantic Resistance (5/10): The half-elf is 30% resistant to Necromantic magic. For 10 CPs, this rises to 60%.

Strong Ancestry (5): For 5 CPs more than the cost listed, the half-elf may select an option available to either elves or humans. If one of the PC's parents was Vistani, the half-elf can choose from the half-Vistani options.

Secret Doors (5): The half-elf can detect secret doors as per *Domains of Dread*.

Sub-Ability Improvement (10): The half-elf can improve any one sub-ability score by +1.

HALFLINGS

Standard abilities: Combat Bonus, Determination, Infravision, Keen Senses (Stouts only), Magic Resistance, Poison Resistance, and Surprise Bonus.

AC Bonus (10): The halfling is deft against larger opponents, gaining a +4 bonus to Armor Class when fighting creatures of size L or greater.

Alertness (10): The halfling is ever-vigilant and quickly responds to crises. The halfling is surprised only on a roll of 1 on 1d8.

Combat Bonus (5): The halfling gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls with thrown weapons or slings as per *Domains of Dread*.

Determination (5): The halfling gains a bonus to Fear, Horror, or Madness checks as per *Domains of Dread*.

Fast Options (20): The halfling pays one CP allotment to receive these options: Alertness, Quick Feet, Quick Reaction, and Speed Wielder.

Infravision (5): The halfling has infravision as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Keen Senses (5): This ability is now available to all halflings, not just Stouts, as per *Domains of Dread*.

Magic Resistance (10): The halfling receives a bonus to saving throws vs. magic as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Poison Resistance (10): The halfling receives a bonus to saving throws vs. poison as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Quick Feet (5): The halfling adds 3 to his or her base movement rate.

Quick Reaction (5): The halfling uses 1d8 when rolling for initiative.

Speed Wielder (5): The halfling wields thrown weapons, slings, and short swords with amazing speed, subtracting 2 from the speed factor of these weapons.

Sub-Ability Improvement (10): The halfling gains +1 to

either the Aim or Balance Dexterity sub-ability score.

Surprise Bonus (5): The PC can Move Silently as described in *Domains of Dread*.

H&LF-VISTANI

Standard abilities: Affinity For Nature, Fire Building, Tralak Understanding, and Tribal Abilities.

Affinity for Nature (10): Similar to druids, half-Vistani have close ties to nature as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Avoid Lunacy (10): The half-Vistana does not suffer the moon madness described in *Domains of Dread*.

Danger Sense (10): The PC is surprised only on a 1 using 1d6.

Fearful Gypsy (5): Folk tales about the Vistani inspire an apprehensive awe in many of the residents of Ravenloft who hear stories about the Vistani ability to walk the mists, foretell the future, and lay curses on those who cross them. Half-Vistani PCs might use these widely believed myths to their advantage to intimidate NPCs. The half-Vistana gains a +2 bonus to all Encounter Reaction checks. When such checks are successful, the NPCs are not actually friendly to the PC. They only hope to avoid making an enemy of someone whom they believe to be tied to the mysterious, vengeful Vistani.

Fire Building (5): The PC is especially adept at building fires even in the most difficult circumstances as per *Domains of Dread*.

Mist Walking (10): Full-blooded Vistani are believed to be able to navigate the mists of Ravenloft to travel wherever they wish in the demiplane. Some half-Vistani have inherited a weaker version of this ability. Once per week, the half-Vistani can attempt to do the same when entering the mists. The chance of success is equal to the PC's combined Intelligence and Wisdom scores plus the character's current level. A half-Vistani PC can take along one companion for every level possessed.

Mixed Tribes (5): The half-Vistani is the descendant of more than one tribe of Vistani. By taking this option, the half-Vistani can choose two tribal abilities from the Tribal Abilities option. The PC must pay 10 CPs for each tribal option taken.

Sub-Ability Improvement (10): The half-Vistana can improve one Intelligence or Wisdom sub-ability score by +1.

Tralak Understanding (5): The half-Vistana is familiar with the mysterious glyphs known as tralaks in *Domains of Dread*.

Tribal Abilities (10): Half-Vistani gain special abilities based on their Vistani ancestry, as described in *Domains of Dread*.

HUMANS

Greater Hit Points (10): The human begins with 2 bonus hit points in addition to those rolled normally with each level.

Mental Fortitude (5): The human receives a +1 bonus to Madness checks.

Sub-Ability Improvement (10): The human can improve any one sub-ability score by one.

Tough Skin (10): The human has a tough skin, granting a natural AC of 8.

4. CHARACTER CLASSES

Each class has a standardized package of abilities found in *Domains of Dread*. These are duplicated here for easy reference. Players may either take the standard list of skills or customize their PCs using the abilities listed here. More information on each class appears in *Domains of Dread*. The paladin, bard, and druid sub-classes are not available as native Ravenloft PCs.

ALL CLASSES

All classes may select the following ability:

Weapon Specialization: The PC can specialize in a single weapon, but the CP cost for acquiring the specialization must be met in addition to paying for this option. This cost varies depending on the character class: fighter 5 CPs; avenger, ranger, gypsy 10 CPs; thief, cleric, mage, anchorite, psionicist 15 CPs; specialist, elementalist, arcanist 20 CPs. Gypsies gain specialization with the knife as per *Domains of Dread*.

WARRIOR

Optional Restrictions

All sub-classes of warrior can gain bonus CPs by accepting voluntary restrictions on normal warrior abilities.

Limited Armor (5/10/15): Warriors with this restriction are limited in their selection of armor. PCs restricted to chainmail or lighter armor gain 5 CPs; PCs limited to studded leather or lighter armor gain 10 CPs; and warriors refusing to wear any armor gain 15 CPs. All warriors can still use a shield.

Limited Weapon Selection (5): The warrior can gain proficiency with weapons in only one of the following groups: melee weapons (no missile weapons allowed), priest weapons, or rogue weapons.

Limited Magical Item Use (5/10/15/20): The warrior refuses to use certain categories of magical items. For each of these barred categories, the warrior gains 5 CPs: potions, oils, and scrolls; rods, staves, wands, and miscellaneous magical items; weapons; and armor.

ALL WARRIOR

Warrior Cross-over (10+): The PC can select any option from another warrior sub-class for 10 CPs more than the cost listed.

FIGHTER

Standard abilities: Bravery and Weapon Specialization.

1d12 for Hit Points (10): The fighter rolls 1d12 for hit points.

Bravery (15): The fighter has bonuses to Fear and Horror

checks as well as the ability to inspire others as per *Domains of Dread*.

Deadly Strike (10): The fighter gains a +2 bonus to damage with one weapon of choice.

Defense Bonus (10/15): The fighter gains a -2 bonus to AC if unarmored and unencumbered. For 15 CPs, the AC bonus is +3.

Enduring Warrior (10): The fighter remains conscious and battle-ready until his or her hit point total reaches -5. Once the character's hit points drop below -5, he or she is rendered unconscious. This option assumes players use the Death's Door option.

Favored Weapon (5): The fighter gains a +1 attack bonus with one weapon of choice.

Improved THAC0 (10): The fighter begins with a +1 bonus on all attack rolls.

Multiple Specialization (10): A fighter with this ability can specialize in as many weapons as desired provided that the CP cost is met for each specialization.

Poison Resistance (5): The fighter has a +1 bonus to saving throws vs. poison.

Proficiency Ease (5): By spending 5 CPs now, the fighter can cut the cost of all weapon proficiencies gained in the future (including all forms of mastery) by 50%.

Spell Resistance (5): The fighter has a +1 bonus to all saving throws vs. spell.

Ranger

Standard abilities: Animal Empathy, Archery, Cure Lycanthropy, Hide In Shadow, Move Silently, Priest Spells, Tracking, and Two-Handed Attacks. If the DM allows, ranger spell restrictions listed in *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic* may be taken for extra CPs.

1d12 For Hit Points (10): The ranger rolls 1d12 for hit points.

Animal Empathy (10): The ranger can approach and befriend an animal as described in the *Player's Handbook* or *Skills & Powers*.

Archery (5): The ranger gains a bonus to fighting with bows as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Climbing (10): The ranger can climb rocks, cliffs, and other natural formations. Climbing score is equal to the ranger's Dexterity/Balance score plus the Hide in Shadows percentage for a ranger of his or her level. (See the table in the *Player's Handbook* or *Skills & Powers*.)

Cure Lycanthropy (10): The ranger can cure lycanthropy as per *Domains of Dread*.

Detect Noise (10): This power is similar to the thief ability, but the ranger uses his or her Wisdom/Intuition score plus the Hide in Shadows ability in *Skills & Powers* to determine the chance of success.



Rangers can find strange allies in the land of mists and shadow.

Find and Remove Traps (10): This ability functions similarly to the thief ability, but the ranger's chance of success is equal to his or her Move Silently percentage as per *Skills & Powers*.

Forest Defender (10): The ranger gains a +1 bonus on attacks, damage, and initiative as well as a -1 bonus to AC when fighting evil creatures in any woodland settings.

High Wisdom Bonus (5): If the ranger has the Priest Spells option, the ranger receives bonus spells based on high Wisdom as clerics do.

Hide In Shadows (5): Wearing studded leather or lighter armor, the ranger can Hide in Shadows as per the *Player's Handbook* or *Skills & Powers*.

Move Silently (5): Wearing studded leather or lighter armor, the ranger can Move Silently as per the *Player's Handbook* or *Skills & Powers*.

Pass Without Trace (10): The ranger can pass without trace as a druid as per the *Player's Handbook*.

Priest Spells (10/15): At 8th level, the ranger can cast priest spells precisely as described in the *Player's Handbook* or *Skills & Powers*. For 15 CPs, the ranger begins casting spells 2 levels earlier at 6th level.

Resist Undead Attacks (10): The ranger's close tie with nature provides some protection against undead. The ranger receives a +4 bonus to all saving throws vs. special attacks by undead such as a ghoul's paralytic touch or a ghost's fear aura. This bonus is not applied to spells cast by spellcasting undead.

Sneak Attack (10): A ranger who successfully avoids persons using Hide in Shadows and Move Silently abilities can backstab

an opponent as the thief ability. A backstab enjoys a +4 attack bonus and inflicts damage as per a thief of the same level.

Speak With Animals (5/10): Once a day, the ranger can speak with animals as the spell. For 10 CPs, the ranger can employ this ability once per day for every three experience levels possessed. Animals under the control of a domain lord might provide misleading information to inquiring rangers.

Tracking Ability (5): The ranger receives the Tracking proficiency, which improves as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Two-handed Attack (5): The ranger suffers no penalties when wielding two weapons as per the *Player's Handbook* or *Skills & Powers*.

Turn Undead (15): At 8th level, the ranger is granted the power to turn undead similar to the priest ability as per *Domains of Dread*.

Undead Enemy (5): The ranger gains a +1 attack bonus against undead opponents.

Weapon Bonus (5): The ranger gains a +1 bonus to attack with any one non-bow weapon of the ranger's choice.

Avenger

Standard abilities: Extra Hit Points, Intuition, and Weapon Specialization.

Extra Hit Points (10/15): When dealing with his or her focus of personal vengeance, the avenger gains extra hit points as described in *Domains of Dread*. For 15 CPs, the avenger gains 1 hp per level when confronting an enemy in melee related to his or her nemesis. When confronting the nemesis, the avenger gains 5 hit points plus 1 hp per level.

Fearsome Focus (10): The avenger's obsession with his or her nemesis allows the avenger to push aside basic physical needs for short periods of time. Once per week, the avenger enjoys the benefits of a potion of vitality.

Hell-bent on Vengeance (5/10): The avenger receives a +1 attack and damage bonus when fighting his or her nemesis or an enemy directly related to the nemesis (such as a henchman). For 10 CPs, the bonuses to hit and damage are +2.

Intuition (5): When pursuing his or her foe, the avenger knows instinctively where to go as per *Domains of Dread*.

Resilience (5): Melee attack damage done to the avenger by his or her nemesis or related enemies are at -1 point of damage per die rolled. No attack can be reduced below 1 point of damage.

Resistance (10): The avenger gains magic resistance equal to 2% per level when fighting his or her nemesis or directly related enemies.

PRIESTS

All priest spheres and their costs are detailed in *Skills & Powers*. If the DM allows, priest restrictions and options listed in *Spells & Magic* may be also selected to further customize priest PCs.

Optional Restrictions

Armor Restriction (5/10/15): The priest is limited in his or her choice of armor. For 5 CPs, the priest is restricted to chain mail or lighter armor; for 10 CPs, the priest is limited to studded leather or lighter armor; and for 15 CPs, the priest can

not wear any armor.

Limited Magical Item Use (5): The priest with this penalty refuses to use certain categories of magical items. The priest gains 5 CPs for every category selected: potions, oils, and scrolls; rings, rods, staves, wands, and miscellaneous items; weapons; and armor.

Reduced Hit Points (10/20): For 10 CPs, the priest uses 1d6 for hit points; for 20 CPs, the priest uses 1d4.

Cleric

Standard abilities: Sphere access (Major—All, Astral, Charm, Combat, Creation, Divination, Elemental, Guardian, Healing, Necromantic, Protection, Summoning, Sun, Weather), Turn/Command Undead.

Access to Spheres: The cleric can purchase major or minor access to the priest spheres of magic. All clerics are generally limited to only those spheres of their power's portfolio. Players should check with their DM to see if their priest is allowed access to spheres not normally granted by their deity.

Casting Reduction (5): The cleric's spells have their casting times reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 1).

Hit Point Bonus (10/15): The cleric rolls 1d10 for hit points; for 15 CPs, the cleric rolls 1d12.

Resist Energy Drain (5): The cleric gains a +2 bonus to all saving throws vs. energy drain attacks and spells, such as *enervation*. This ability has no effect where no saving throw is allowed or when used in conjunction with the *negative plane protection* spell.

Revenance (10): The priest gains 2% magic resistance per level when magically attacked by undead.

Spell Duration Increase (10): The duration of all non-instantaneous spells cast by the cleric increases by 1 round for every two experience levels.

Sphere Bonus (6+): The cleric can purchase major or minor access to one sphere of priest spells that normally lies outside the cleric's power's portfolio. The cost is twice the standard cost listed in *Skills & Powers*.

Turn/Command Undead (10): The cleric is granted powers over undead as per *Domains of Dread*.

Warrior-Priests (10): Clerics with this option gain bonuses for exceptional Strength and Constitution scores as warriors.

Weapon Allowance (5): A cleric with this option can opt to use a favored, edged weapon of his or her deity. The PC must also pay for proficiency with the weapon.

Wizardly Priests (10/15): The cleric gains access to one school of wizard spells and can cast them as if they were clerical spells. For 10 CPs, the cleric gains minor access to that school. For 15 CPs, the cleric gains major access. At the DM's discretion, this may include the more stylized wizard schools such as the school of Force and Wild Magic.

Anchorite

Standard abilities: Mist Walking, Sanctuary, Shield of Ezra, Sphere access, and Turn Undead.

Armor of Ezra (10): Once per day, the anchorite can cast an *armor* spell.

Casting Reduction (5): The anchorite's casting time is reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 1).

Ezra's Assistance (10): The anchorite can turn undead as if 1 level higher.

Ezra's Watchfulness (10): At 5th level, the anchorite can summon a force similar to *Mordenkainen's faithful hound* to watch over the PC and his or her charges once per week.

Hit Point Bonus (10/15): The anchorite rolls 1d10 for hit points; for 15 CPs, the PC rolls 1d12.

Mist Walking (10/15): The anchorite gains the ability to traverse the mists as described in *Domains of Dread*. For 15 CPs, the PC can travel the mists beginning at 7th level.

Sanctuary (5): The anchorite receives safe haven and shelter in any temple devoted to Ezra as per *Domains of Dread*.

Shield of Ezra (10/15): For 10 CPs, the anchorite gains a special defense based on the PC's alignment as per the anchorite class in *Domains of Dread*. For 15 CPs, the character can use any of the three types of shield regardless of the anchorite's alignment. The anchorite is still limited to the same number of uses per day regardless of which option is taken.

Spell Duration Increase (10): The duration of all non-instantaneous spells cast by the anchorite increases by 1 round for every two of the priest's experience levels.

Sphere Access: Based on the PC's alignment, an anchorite has access to a select group of spell spheres. For 55 CPs, the anchorite gains access to all spheres as described in *Domains of Dread*. Otherwise, the PC pays the point cost listed for each sphere as listed in *Skills & Powers*. Anchorites seeking access to spheres outside of those allotted must pay double the CP cost.

Sword of Ezra (10): Favored by the few militant followers of Ezra, this option is frowned upon by most of the clergy of Ezra. At 9th level, the priest can summon a *Mordenkainen's sword* that fights for the anchorite once per day.

Turn Undead (10): The anchorite is granted powers over undead as per *Domains of Dread*.

ROGUES

Standard Rogue Thieving Skills

Thieves and bards have access to any standard skills listed in the sidebar provided that each is purchased with CPs. The base values of each rogue skill are detailed in *Skills & Powers*. Racial modifiers for the standard races are also detailed in *Skills & Powers*. Modifiers based on Dexterity and the specific type of armor worn are found in *Skills & Powers*. These skills can be improved as the thief advances in level, but the improvements vary according to the player's wishes. At 1st level, thieves begin with 60 discretionary points to be spent on these skills. At every level thereafter, the thief gains 30 more points to spend on thieving skills. A complete description of all these skills appears in *Skills & Powers*.



Careless rogues soon learn the value of hiding without a trace.

Optional Restrictions

No Armor Restriction (5): Rogues with this option refuse to wear armor. For 10 CPs, the rogue forever forgoes the use of any armor or shield.

Limited Magical Item Use (5): The rogue refuses to use certain categories of magical items. For each category that is barred, the rogue gains 5 CPs. The categories are: potions, oils, and scrolls; rods, staves, wands, and miscellaneous magical items; magical weapons and armor.

Thief

Standard Abilities: Backstab, Climb Walls, Detect Noise, Find/Remove Traps, Hide in Shadows, Move Silently, Open Locks, Pick Pockets, Read Languages, Scroll Use, and Thieves' Cant.

Aversion (10): The sly thief is better able to avoid the attention of the Dark Powers. All Powers checks by the thief are decreased by 1%.

Backstab (10): The thief can attack an opponent with a vicious backstab as detailed in *Skills & Powers*.

Backstab Bonus (5): A thief who has chosen backstab now attacks with a +6 bonus (instead of +4) to all backstab attacks.

Defensive Bonus (10/15): An unarmored and unencumbered thief gains a -2 bonus to Armor Class. For 15 CPs, the thief receives a -3 bonus to AC.

Exquisite Stab (10): The thief is treated as if two levels higher when applying the backstab damage multiplier.

Scroll Use (5/10): At 10th level, the thief can use magical

spell scrolls as per *Skills & Powers*. For 10 CPs, the thief may read scrolls at any level.

Thieves' Cant (5): The thief speaks and understands obscure slang terms when referring to illegal activities, thus diminishing the threat of eavesdroppers.

Tough Thug (10): The thief gains warrior hit point bonuses for possessing a high Constitution.

Warrior-Thief (10): The thief fights using the warrior THAC0 table.

Without a Trace (10): This option can be taken only if the thief also has Move Silently, Climb Walls, and Hide in Shadows. The thief is a master at becoming scarce, surprisingly doing so even when in plain sight. Upon a successful check, the thief has found some unseen niche, shadowy location, or low-hanging rooftop in which to hide quickly and unnoticed while bystanders are distracted. To effect this trick, the thief must make successive Move Silently, Climb Walls, and Hide in Shadows checks—any one failure indicates the trick fails. When successful, only magical means can reveal the thief's location.

Gypsy

Standard Abilities: Gypsy Lore, Spell Ability, and Weapon Specialization (Knife Fighting).

Alluring Charmer (10): Once a day, the gypsy can cast *charm person*. At 9th level, the gypsy can cast *charm monster* instead of *charm person* once per day.

Aversion (10): The PC knows some of the mysterious ways of his or her gypsy people, thus granting a greater chance of avoiding the Dark Powers' attentions. All Powers checks are decreased by 2%.

Backstab (15): The gypsy can Backstab as a thief of the same level.

Charm Resistance (10): The gypsy gains a +2 bonus to saving throws against Enchantment/Charm spells and effects.

Cheat Fate (5): Gypsies are often said to be masters at deciding their own fates. Once a week, the gypsy can choose to re-roll any single die roll such as a failed attack or saving throw, initiative, or weapon damage.

Free Blade (5): The gypsy is free to wield any weapon normally allowed to rogues. The gypsy may even specialize in these weapons if the PC has the weapon specialization option.

Gypsy Lore (5): The gypsy knows a little bit about everything as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Magic User (10): The gypsy can use magical items normally restricted to wizards.

Rogue Skills (5+): For 5 CPS more than the cost listed, the gypsy may purchase one of the following rogue skills: Hide in Shadows, Detect Noise, Find and Remove Traps, or Move Silently. The chance of success is equal to that of a ranger possessing the same skill as per *Skills & Powers*.

Spell Ability (10): The gypsy can cast spells as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Wily Resourcefulness (10): A gypsy can attempt to perform

any one of the following thieving skills: Climb Walls, Escape Bonds, Find/Remove Traps, Hide in Shadows, Move Silently, or Pick Pockets. The chance of success is equal to the gypsy's Dexterity score plus 5% per level of the gypsy. The gypsy may attempt one such action once a week per level of the character.

Wizard's Touch (5): For 5 CPs more than the cost listed, a gypsy can select any option available to wizards. The PC must have Spell Ability to take this option.

WIZARDS

The following options are available to all wizards in addition to options particular to each sub-class. If the DM approves, additional options for wizards found in *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic* may also be purchased.

Options for All Wizards

Armored Wizard (5/10/15): As a 5-point ability, the wizard can wear padded armor. For 10 CPs, the wizard can wear leather, studded leather, hide, or brigandine armor. For 15 CPs, the wizard can wear any armor desired. Wizards are not allowed to use shields.

Extra Spell (10): The wizard can memorize one additional spell per spell level. This bonus must belong to that wizard's specialty field.

Casting Reduction (5): The wizard's spells have their casting times reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 1).

Combat Bonus (10/20): The wizard gains a priest's THAC0. For 20 CPs, the wizard gains a warrior's THAC0.

Extend Duration (10): The duration of all non-instantaneous spells increases by 1 round for every two experience levels of the wizard. If taken by any type of specialty wizard, this option extends a non-instantaneous spell's duration by 1 round per level, but the spell must belong to the wizard's specialty school.

Greater Hit Die (10/15/20): For 10 CPs, the wizard rolls 1d6 for hit points. For 15 CPs, the wizard rolls 1d8. For 20 CPs, the wizard rolls 1d10.

Negate Penalty (15): Specialists, elementalists, and arcanists do not suffer any penalty when attempting to learn spells outside their specialty school.

No Components (10): The wizard can designate one spell per character level as a spell that does not require material components. Specialists, elementalists, and arcanists must choose a spell from their chosen area of study.

Range Boost (5): The reach of all ranged spells (other than 0, self, or touch) from one school selected by the wizard is increased by 25%. Specialty wizards must apply this option to their chosen school.

Read Magic (5): The wizard can *read magic* once a day for every three levels possessed.

Spell Acquisition (5): When a wizard with this option gains access to a new level of spells, the wizard automatically acquires a spell for that level. Wizards who specialize may only select spells belonging to their area of expertise.

Optional Restrictions

With their DMs approval, players may opt to select other wizard limitations in *Spells & Magic*.

Limited Magical Item Use (5/10/15): Wizards with this penalty refuse to use certain categories of magical items. A wizard gains 5 CPs for every category selected: potions, oils, and scrolls; rings, rods, staves, wands, and miscellaneous items; all weapons and armor.

More Opposition Schools (5/10/15): Specialists, elementalists, and arcanists with this restriction can choose to take additional opposing schools, gaining 5 additional CPs for each school in opposition to their specialty. Only standard specialty schools as described in the *Player's Handbook* can be selected as schools of opposition. This option is not available to mages.

Reduced Hit Points (10): The wizard uses 1d3 for hit points rather than 1d4.

Weapon Restriction (3/5): For 3 CPs, the wizard can never have a weapon proficiency. For 5 CPs, the wizard can never wield a weapon even to save his or her life. This last restriction is not limited to weapons wholly created by the wizard's spells, such as *ice knife*.

Mage

Standard abilities: School Access.

School Access: It costs 40 CPs for a mage to have access to all eight standard schools of magic.

Priestly Wizard (10/15): For 10 CPs, the mage gains minor access to one sphere of priest spells and can cast them as if they were wizard spells. For 15 CPs, the mage gains major access to that sphere. The mage can learn priestly spells through research or discovering priest spell scrolls.

Spell Resistance (5): The mage receives a +1 bonus to saving throws vs. spell from any one school of magic.

Warrior Wizard (10): The mage enjoys the benefits of a high Constitution score as a warrior.

Specialist

Standard abilities: Creating New Spells, Extra Spell, Learning Spells, Powers Checks, Spell Acquisition, and Saving Throw Adjustment.

Creating New Spells (5): When attempting to research and create a new spell belonging to the PC's specialized school, the spell is treated as one level lower than its actual level.

Extra Bonus Spell (10): If the Extra Spell option was taken, the specialist now receives a second bonus spell per spell level provided that the spell belongs to the PC's chosen school.

Learning Spells (5): The specialist receives a bonus when attempting to learn new spells as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Magic Resistance (10): The specialist mage receives magic resistance equal to 2% per level against spells of his or her chosen school.

Powers Checks (5): The specialist can halve Powers checks as per *Domains of Dread*.

Saving Throw Adjustment (5): The specialist receives a saving throw bonus as described in *Domains of Dread*. Likewise, opponents of the specialist suffer a penalty when subject to spells cast from the wizard's specialty.

Spell Boosting (5): All spells from the PC's school are treated as if the caster were a higher level, similar to the elementalist ability as per *Domains of Dread*.

Elementalist

Standard abilities: Controlling Elementals, Creating New Spells, Extra Spell, Learning Spells, Powers Checks, Saving Throw Adjustment, Spell Boosting, and Taming Elementals. All Elementalist wizards suffer a penalty when attempting to learn spells outside of their specialized school as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Controlling Elementals (5): The wizard can control elementals as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Creating New Spells (5): When attempting to research and create a new spell belonging to the PC's element, the spell is treated as one level lower than its actual level.

Extra Bonus Spell (10): If the Extra Spell option was taken, the specialist now receives a second bonus spell per spell level provided that the spell belongs to the PC's chosen school.

Learning Spells (5): The elementalist receives a +15% bonus when attempting to learn new spells belonging to the wizard's specialty school.

Magic Resistance (10): The elementalist receives magic resistance equal to 2% per level against magic of his or her element.

Powers Checks (5): The elementalist can halve Powers checks as per *Domains of Dread*.

Priestly Elementalism (15): The elementalist can research, learn, and cast elemental priest spells as wizard spells.

Saving Throw Adjustment (5): The elementalist receives a saving throw bonus as described in *Domains of Dread*. Likewise, opponents of the elementalist suffer a penalty when subjected to spells from the wizard's chosen element.

Spell Boosting (5): All spells from the wizard's element cast by the elementalist are treated as if the caster were a higher level as per *Domains of Dread*.

Taming Elementals (5): The elementalist can attempt to tame elementals as per *Domains of Dread*.

Arcanist

Standard abilities: Forbidden Lore, Horror Checks, Learning Spells, Saving Throw Adjustment, and Turn/Command Undead. Arcanists suffer a penalty when attempting to learn spells outside of their specialized school as described in *Domains of Dread*.

Affect Powers Checks (10): The arcanist can halve Powers checks as elementalists and specialists can as per *Domains of Dread*.

Distinctive Necromancy (15): The arcanist can treat one Necromantic spell as one level lower for purposes of memorization and casting. The arcanist can do this three times, thus providing the arcanist with greater use of three Necromantic spells. For example, an arcanist with this ability who memorizes the 2nd-level *spectral hand* as a distinctive Necromantic spell fills an available 1st-level spell slot.

Extra Bonus Spell (10): If the Extra Spell option was taken, the arcanist now receives a second bonus Necromantic spell

Psionicist Group Proficiencies

Proficiency	Point Cost	Initial Rating	Ability	Source
Contact	Free/5*	N/A	Wisdom/Willpower	Skills & Powers
Harness Subconscious	4	6	Wisdom/Willpower	Skills & Powers
Hypnosis	3	7	Charisma/Leadership	Complete Psionicist's Handbook
Meditative Focus	3	5	Wisdom/Willpower	Skills & Powers
Rejuvenation	3	6	Wisdom/Intuition	Skills & Powers

Contact is a free proficiency for psionicists. Wild talents must pay 5 CPs to obtain this proficiency.

per spell level.

Forbidden Lore (10): The arcanist has access to hidden secrets and dark knowledge as per *Domains of Dread*.

Horror Checks (5/10): The arcanist receives a +2 bonus to all horror checks. For 10 CPs, the arcanist is so inured to horrifying scenes that she automatically succeeds all Horror checks.

Learning Spells (5): The arcanist receives a +15% bonus when attempting to learn new spells from the arcanist's specialty school.

Necromantic Resistance (10): The arcanist receives magic resistance equal to 2% per level against Necromantic magic.

Precision Necromancy (10): Baneful Necromantic spells such as *chill touch* or *vampiric touch* cast by the arcanist cause 1 additional point of damage per level of the caster. If the Necromantic spell does not cause a loss of hit points (such as *enervation*), the victim suffers a -4 penalty to saving throws vs. that spell.

Priestly Necromancy (15): The arcanist can learn priest spells from the Necromantic sphere.

Saving Throw Adjustment (5): The arcanist receives a saving throw bonus as described in *Domains of Dread*. Likewise, opponents of the arcanist suffer a penalty when subject to spells cast from the arcanist's specialty school.

Turn/Command Undead (10/15): The arcanist is granted powers over undead similar to priests as per *Domains of Dread*. For 15 CPs, the arcanist gains power over undead as if one level higher.

PSIONICISTS

Standard abilities: Access to Disciplines, Attack Modes (all), Defense Modes (all), and Willpower.

Access to Disciplines (10/50): Each discipline costs 10 CPs or 50 CPs for all five.

Attack Modes (5/25): The psionicist selects one attack mode for each 5 CPs expended (Ego Whip, Id Insinuation, Mind Thrust, Psionic Blast, Psychic Crush).

Defense Modes (5/25): The psionicist selects one defense mode for each 5 CPs expended (Intellect Fortress, Mental Barrier, Mind Blank, Thought Shield, Tower of Iron Will).

Greater Hit Points (10/15): The psionicist rolls 1d8 for hit points for 10 CPs; For 15 CPs, the psionicist rolls 1d10 for hit points.

Lifeforce (5): The constant use of the psionicist's life energies to power abilities has steeled him or her against attacks from the unliving. The psionicist gains a +1 bonus to all saving throws vs. undead special attacks and magic.

Mental Expertise (5): The psionicist is highly skilled in the

use of one devotion from each discipline. The psionicist pays only 50% of the cost to power and maintain one specified devotion from each discipline. Once a devotion has been selected, the psionicist cannot change it to another one.

More PSPs (10): At every level advancement, the psionicist rolls 2d6 for more PSPs in addition to what is normally rolled.

Psionic Powers Bonus (10): At every 3rd level, the psionicist selects one bonus devotion. At every 5th level, the psionicist can add a bonus science. Bonus psionic powers must belong to the psionicist's primary discipline.

PSP Recovery (10): The psionicist has adapted to the dampening energies of Ravenloft that tax all psionicists' mental energies. When regaining PSPs (Table 109: Regaining PSPs, in *Domains of Dread*), the psionicist recovers 50% additional PSPs, rounded up. The PC cannot exceed his or her maximum PSPs in this way.

Strength From Within (10): The psionicist's disciplined mind provides a stronger resistance to the terrors of Ravenloft. The psionicist receives a +1 to all Madness, Fear, and Horror checks.

Warrior-Psionicist (10): The psionicist uses the warrior THAC0 table.

Willpower (5): The psionicist receives a +2 bonus to saving throws vs. Enchantment/Charm spells as per *Domains of Dread*.

Optional Restrictions

No Armor Restriction (10): Psionicists with this option refuse to wear any armor.

No Weapons Restriction (10): Psionicists who are purists regard the mind and body as the ultimate weapon. Such psionicists disdain the use of any physical weapons preferring their natural weapons and psionic abilities. A psionicist who refuses to fight with any weapon receives this bonus.

5. KITS

The *Champions of the Mists* supplement describes fifteen new kits.

All Classes/All Races: Accursed, cold one, fugitive, ghost-watcher, monster hunter, psychic, redeemed

All Classes: Pistoleer (gnome, human, halfling, half-elf, half-Vistani)

Cleric: Green Hand (human, half-elf, half-Vistani priest of Osiris), Order of the Guardian

Rogue: Invisible

Warrior: Knight of the shadows (human, dwarf, half-Vistani avenger)

Wizard: Eremite (human, half-elf, half-Vistani), spiritualist

(human mage)

The Demiplane of Dread is a mosaic of persons and lands stolen from many worlds and campaign settings. It is conceivable that kits from most any AD&D setting could be found in Ravenloft. Players seeking to import kits from other AD&D sources should seek the approval of their DMs.

6. NONWEAPON PROFICIENCIES

At this stage of PC development, players spend CPs on non-weapon proficiencies and traits. Standard nonweapon proficiencies by point cost are listed in *Skills & Powers* and *Spells & Magic*. Ravenloft warriors, rogues, priests, and wizards receive the same number of CPs as the standard AD&D classes. Psionicists can use the table above for psionic-specific nonweapon proficiencies found in the *Complete Psionics Handbook* and in *Skills & Powers*.

Chapter 6 of *Skills & Powers* also offers traits and disadvantages for all PCs. These options include Phobias, Greed, and Lucky, and might affect a PC when rolling a Powers, Fear, Horror, or Madness check. At the DM's discretion, some traits might allow for saving throw bonuses while some disadvantages add penalties to saving throws.

7. WEAPON PROFICIENCY & MASTERY

See Chapter 7 of *Skills & Powers* for more information on acquiring weapon proficiencies and other weapon skills. Warriors, rogues, priests, and wizards in the RAVENLOFT setting obey standard AD&D game weapons rules.

Proficiency rules for psionicists not included in *Skills & Powers* are provided below.

♦ Psionicists receive an initial 6 CPs to purchase weapon proficiencies. Psionicists pay 3 CPs to become proficient in any weapon allowed to the class. A complete list of allowable weapons for psionicists appears in both *Domains of Dread* and *Skills & Powers*.

♦ Psionicists must spend an additional 2 CPs (for a total of 5 CPs) to become proficient in a weapon normally allowed to a priest or a rogue. To become proficient in a weapon limited to warriors, the psionicist must spend an additional 3 CPs (for a total of 6 CPs).

♦ A psionicist must spend 3 CPs to gain a weapon of choice.

♦ A psionicist must spend 5 CPs to receive weapon expertise.

At 7th level, psionicists who have opted for weapon specialization can spend an additional 8 CPs to specialize in one weapon.

8. MAGIC

Spellcasting in Ravenloft is perilous and wondrous. Some spells are diminished or simply do not work. Others attract the baneful attention of the Dark Powers.

Ravenloft spell and magic alterations are covered in Chapters 8, 9, and 11 in *Domains of Dread*. Spells from *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic* are affected as follows:

Wizard Spells

- *Arrow of Bone*—Requires a Powers check.

Conjure Elemental-Kin—The caster has a 20% chance of summoning a Ravenloft elemental version of the elemental-

kin as per the wizard spell *conjure elemental*. DMs should be creatively fiendish in designing affected elemental-kin (such as grave-pech, blood-grue, and so on).

Descent into Madness—Requires a Powers check.

Detect Phase—This spell is incapable of breaching the Mists, so it is ineffective in Ravenloft.

Etherealness—This spell cannot be used to travel to other domains in the demiplane, nor can it be used to escape Ravenloft.

Heart of Stone—Requires a Powers check. Observers viewing the wizard replacing his or her own beating heart with one of stone must make a Horror check with a -2 penalty.

Programmed Amnesia—Requires a Powers check.

Prying Eyes—Observers of the flying, disembodied eyes that this spell creates must make a Fear check.

Ray of Fatigue—Requires a Powers check.

Sphere of Ultimate Destruction—Requires a Powers Check. Under no circumstances can a spell malfunction teleport the caster to another plane of existence. Under such circumstances, the caster is transported to another domain in Ravenloft.

Wall of Gloom—Requires a Powers check. Observers of a *wall of gloom* might have to make a Fear check. Creatures of 4 Hit Dice or less automatically fail their saving throw and flee for 2d3 rounds. Creatures of 4+1 to 7 Hit Dice must make a saving throw at a -4 penalty or suffer the spell's hesitation effect for 2 rounds.

Priest Spells

Cause Moderate Wounds—Requires a Powers check.

Dimensional Translocation—This spell cannot be used to banish creatures from Ravenloft. This spell functions normally when used to seal off the multidimensional existence of magical or extraplanar creatures. Undead creatures in Ravenloft cannot be cut off from the Negative Material Plane.

Ethereal Barrier—When cast near a misty border, this spell prevents someone from emerging within the spell's area of effect.

Etherealness—This spell cannot be used to travel to other domains in the demiplane, nor can it be used to escape Ravenloft.

Summon Animal Spirit—While this spell does not require a Powers check, there is a 20% chance that the elemental spirit summoned is twisted by the nature of the demiplane.

9. PSIONICS

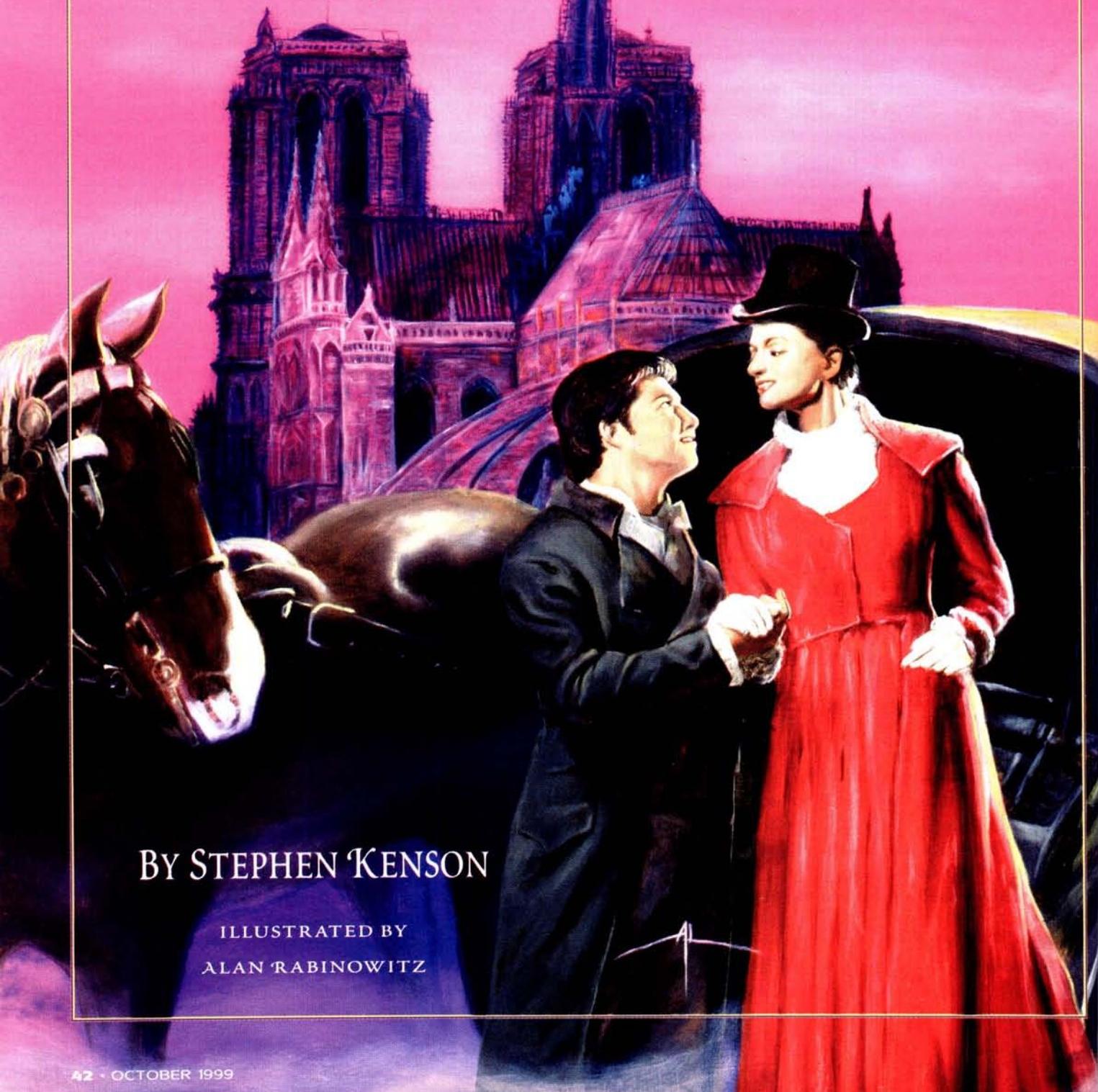
Psionics, like magic, has its share of dangers when employed in the Demiplane of Dread. Chapter 10 in *Domains of Dread* covers the many rules changes for psionics. Ravenloft psionicists and wild talents use the rules in *Skills & Powers* to roll PSPs, determine MTHAC0 & MAC, and select psionic powers. Psionicists do not receive wild talents. A wild talent's psionic ability and attack/defense modes cost no CPs. Characters with wild talents who wish to initiate a psionic attack must first purchase the Contact nonweapon proficiency for 5 CPs.



Ed reports that he is redecorating his apartment with Impressionist art but has sadly discovered that fantasy Impressionist landscapes are nowhere to be found. He'd kill for a Monet-esque take on Baator!

Saga of Gothic Earth

USING THE SAGA® SYSTEM RULES FOR THE
MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH™ CAMPAIGN



BY STEPHEN KENSON

ILLUSTRATED BY
ALAN RABINOWITZ

The SAGA System rules—used for the DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE® game and the MARVEL SUPER HEROES® Adventure Game—emphasize plot and character, making them perfectly suited for telling tales set in the Gothic Earth of the MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH Campaign Expansion for the RAVENLOFT® setting. Of course, the world of Gothic Earth differs considerably from that of Krynn, so some modification of the existing SAGA rules is needed to reflect the needs of a Masque story.

The Fate Deck

To create a Fate Deck for the MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH setting, take an ordinary deck of fifty-two playing cards, plus one Joker. The card suits are aligned with the four major abilities of **Physique** (spades), **Coordination** (clubs), **Intellect** (diamonds), and **Essence** (hearts). Each suit also matches one of the classes known on Gothic Earth: **Soldier** (spades), **Tradesman** (clubs), **Adept** (diamonds), and **Mystic** (hearts). These cards run from Aces (with a value of one) through Tens. Face cards (Jack, Queen, and King) are all combined to form a "suit" of their own, called the Fear Suit. They represent the power of the Red Death on Gothic Earth, evil and terrible influences. Face cards have a value of 4 for Jacks, 5 for Queens, and 6 for Kings. These cards have special effects when played in the game (see below).

If you want additional flavor, a deck of tarot cards can be used for the Fate Deck, removing the Major Arcana cards and using only the Minor Arcana. The suits correspond to the abilities in much the same way: **Physique** (swords), **Coordination** (wands), **Intellect** (pentacles), and **Essence** (Cups). The court cards are used to make up the Fear Suit, as above. If the Narrator has access to a Tarotka deck from the *Forbidden Lore* RAVENLOFT accessory and the "SAGA of the Mists" article from DRAGON® Magazine #240, then that Fate Deck system can be used in place of the one above.

The suits are treated exactly as the normal SAGA System Fate Deck for action resolution. Exceptions are noted below.

The Fear Pool

Unlike the Suit of Dragons from the FIFTH AGE game, Fear Suit cards are not treated as mishaps when played. Instead, Fear cards are played normally, using their numerical value. The

card then goes into a "Fear Pool" face up in front of the Narrator. This represents the Red Death gathering power from the struggles of the heroes. At any time thereafter, the Narrator can draw cards from the Fear Pool to increase the difficulty of actions taken by the heroes against a Dark Lord or any of its minions or machinations. Fear Pool cards cannot be used to increase the difficulty of other actions, only to effect things directly related to the central villain of the story and its agents. The longer heroes struggle with an agent of the Red Death, the more potentially powerful it becomes.

However, heroes have the ability to overcome fear by thwarting the Dark Lords and their plans. These actions allow the heroes to "clear" the Fear Pool, removing all cards from it. The heroes clear the Fear Pool any time they accomplish a major story objective that thwarts the villain and helps the heroes to muster their courage and fight on. For example, defeating one of a Dark Lord's minions, exposing the truth about a sinister plot, or rescuing innocent lives from evil all constitute actions that would empty the Fear Pool. The Narrator must balance the desire of the Dark Lord to hoard Fear cards for a climactic confrontation and the need to use them against the heroes before they can clear the cards out of the Fear Pool.

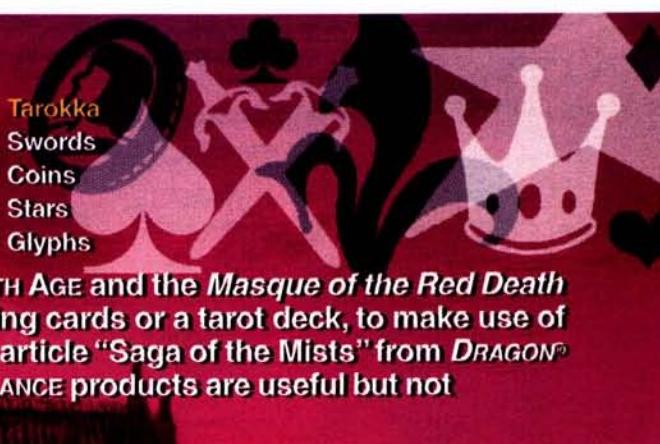
Character Creation

Character creation for a SAGA MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH campaign is virtually identical to that in FIFTH AGE, with the following exceptions. The player draws a hand of eight cards from the Fate Deck and discards any two. The remaining cards are assigned to the abilities of Physique, Coordination, Intellect, Essence, Reputation, and Wealth, as desired. A card from the suit that matches an ability gives it a Code of "A." A card from

Ability, Class, and Card Suit Translations

Ability	Class	Playing Cards	Tarot	Tarotka
Physique	Soldier	Spades	Swords	Swords
Coordination	Tradesman	Clubs	Wands	Coins
Intellect	Adept	Diamonds	Pentacles	Stars
Essence	Mystic	Hearts	Cups	Glyphs

You'll need the Saga System rules from DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE and the *Masque of the Red Death* Campaign Expansion, along with a deck of ordinary playing cards or a tarot deck, to make use of this material. Narrators may also find Matthew L. Martin's article "Saga of the Mists" from DRAGON® Magazine issue #240 useful. Other RAVENLOFT and DRAGONLANCE products are useful but not essential to enjoy a "Saga of Gothic Earth."



the other suit in the pair (red or black), gives an ability code of "B." A card from the opposite pair (black vs. red) provides a code of "C," and a card from the opposite suit (spades vs. diamonds, or clubs vs. hearts) gives a code of "D." Face cards provide an ability code of "X." Players choose their hero's Nature and Demeanor.

Ability Scores and Codes

As mentioned above, the Masque version of the SAGA rules uses only the four core abilities of Physique, Coordination, Intellect, and Essence. If desired, the full eight abilities from the FIFTH AGE rules can be used, but this tends to prove redundant due to the limited number of suits in the Fate Deck.

Ability codes work slightly differently for Masque. The code indicates the number of skills the hero possesses for that ability (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, X=0). Heroes with an "A" code in Intellect may choose the wizardry ability in place of one Intellect skill. Heroes with an "A" code in Essence may choose the ability to use mysticism in place of one Essence skill. (For information on wizardry and mysticism, see below.)

Skills

Skills equate to the proficiencies from the *Guide to Gothic Earth* in the MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH campaign set. In general, possession of a skill reduces the difficulty of performing actions involving the skill by one level. Heroes can have up to four skills per ability, for a maximum of twelve. Wizardry and mysticism take the place of one skill each. A hero gains a new skill at each increase in Reputation (from Adventurer to Champion, for example), which is chosen by the player.

Firearms Values

Weapon	Type	Class	Damage
Carbine	Missile	M	+5
Carbine, Repeating	Missile	M	+6
Pistol, Army	Missile	L	+6
Pistol, Navy	Missile	L	+5
Pistol, Derringer	Missile	VL	+3
Rifle	Missile	M	+9
Rifle, Repeating	Missile	M	+10
Scattergun	Missile	M	+8
Shotgun	Missile	M	+8

The skills are:

❖ **Physique:** Athletics, Axes, Blacksmith, Bludgeons, Carpentry, Climb Walls, Endurance, Knives, Masonry, Mountaineering, Pugilism, Running, Spears, Swimming, Swords, Whips, Wrestling.

❖ **Coordination:** Backstabbing, Blind Fighting, Brewing, Bows, Clockwork, Cobbling, Dancing, Equestrian, Find/Remove Traps, Fire Building, Fishing, Hide in Shadows, Hunting, Jeweler, Marksmanship, Move Silently, Open Locks, Photography, Pick Pockets, Pottery, Quick Draw, Rope Use, Seaman-ship, Set Snares, Taxidermy, Teamster, Tightrope Walking, Tumbling, Weaving.

❖ **Intellect:** all Educational proficiencies, Agriculture, Alchemy, Appraising, Artillery, Cooking, Demolition, Detect Noise, Forbidden Lore, Forgery, Gunsmithing, Heraldry, Herbalism, History, Journalism, Language, Mining, Navigation, Read Languages, Read Lips, Spellcraft, Survival, Tanning, Toxicology, Tracking, Ventriloquism.

❖ **Essence:** Animal Husbandry, Artisan, Disguise, Etiquette, Gaming, Healing, Mesmerism, Musician, Prognostication, Psychometry, Religion, Savoir-Faire, Singing, Sixth Sense, Spiritcraft.

See the *Guide to Gothic Earth*, Chapter III, for more information on individual skills. Narrators may use the optional skill system from the *SAGA Companion* in place of this system, if desired.

Firearms

All of the weapons and armor described in the FIFTH AGE game can be used as-is. The major additional weapons in the Masque setting are firearms. Guns are fired with an average Coordination (Coordination) action and the Marksmanship

skill. The gun's damage value is added to the action total to determine damage, which is compared against the target's Physique. Ordinary armor provides no protection from gunfire, although the armor possessed by various creatures might do so at the Narrator's discretion. All the rifles listed in the table can fire out to Far Missile range, and pistols can fire to Near Missile range. The exceptions are the derringer and the scattergun, which can fire only to Melee Range.

Wizardry and Mysticism

Magic on Gothic Earth is far more limited than in the Fifth Age of Krynn. Only heroes with an "A" code in Intellect or Essence can study the arts of wizardry and mysticism, and they must sacrifice one of their initial skills to do so. Wizardry follows the rules for sorcery, while Gothic Earth mysticism uses the same rules as FIFTH AGE mysticism. Heroes calculate spell points in the same manner. Spellcasting actions also follow the normal SAGA rules, except where noted otherwise. Narrators might find the additional SAGA magic rules from "Saga of the Mists" useful additions to the options presented here.

Adepts and mystics have access to all the schools of wizardry or spheres of mysticism. Spellcasting on Gothic Earth is a complex procedure that involves carefully researched and studied formulas and rituals. Adepts and mystics start out knowing a number of individual spells equal to their number of Quests. The player must design these spells and submit them to the Narrator. The hero cannot cast any spell he or she does not know. The hero gains an additional spell after each completed Quest. The player must design the desired spell before the Quest is completed. A few common spells are described below.

Gothic Earth spellcasters also function under some specific limitations.

- ❖ All spellcasting requires a Powers Check (described below).
- ❖ No spell can detect a subject's true Nature or reveal if a subject is good or evil.
- ❖ No spell can have an Invocation time of less than a minute.
- ❖ No spell can reach outside the dimension of Gothic Earth.



The SAGA rules are perfect for adventures filled with intricate plots and ancient mysteries.

Chilling Touch (Cryomancy)

Invocation: 1 minute • Range: personal • Duration: instant • Area: individual • Effect: +9 damage • Cost/Difficulty: 9 spell points

This spell creates a chilling, pale blue aura around the caster's hand, which causes 9 damage points to any target the caster touches.

Detect Magic (Divination or Sensitivity)

Invocation: 10 minutes • Range: personal • Duration: instant • Area: large room • Effect: troublesome • Cost/Difficulty: 10 spell points

This spell allows the caster to sense the presence of any active magic in the area of effect.

Protection from Undead (Necromancy)

Invocation: 20 minutes • Range: personal • Duration: 1 hour • Area: individual • Effect: impeding • Cost/Difficulty: 13 spell points

This spell creates an invisible aura of protection around the subject, preventing undead from directly touching the subject without first making a challenging Essence action opposed by the caster's Essence.

Powers Checks

The power of the Red Death is drawn to acts of evil. Any hero who performs an evil act must immediately draw from the Fate Deck. A Red King on any Powers Check indicates that the hero has drawn the attention of the Red Death. Especially evil acts might be noticed on

the draw of any red face card. Casting a spell requires a normal Powers Check. If the spell is from the Necromancy school, or used for evil purposes (in the Narrator's opinion), a draw of any Red Face card gains the attention of the Red Death. If the spell is both necromantic and used for evil purposes, a draw of any Face card gains the attention of the Red Death. Use the "Suggested Results of Failed Powers Checks" on page 57 of *A Guide to Gothic Earth* as a guideline for the results of a failed Powers Check. ♣

Steve Kenson would like to thank Matthew Martin for first using the SAGA System for the RAVENLOFT setting, and the guys at the "SAGA of Your Own" Seminar at the GEN CON Game Fair for inspiring this article.

THE OERIDIAN LESSER GODS

PART II: RAXIVORT AND SOTILLON

BY ANDY MILLER

ILLUSTRATED BY REBECCA GUAY



Few gods of Oerth are less alike than the Night Flutterer and Lady Harvest. One is a grotesque incarnation of all that is selfish and cruel in xvartkind, while the other embodies nourishment.

In this second part of a three-issue series expanding the GREYHAWK® campaign, learn the secrets of Raxivort and Sotillon, two more of the Oeridian lesser gods.

RAXIVORT

(Lord of Xvartkind, Packmaster of Rats, Night Flutterer)
Lesser Power of Pandemonium, CE

Portfolio: Rats, wererats, xvarts

Aliases: None

Domain Name: Pandesmos/The Black Sewers

Superior: None

Allies: None

Foes: Incabulos, Graz'zt

Symbol: Hand of flames (blue)

Worshippers' Alignment: CE

Raxivort (RAX-i-vort) was not always a god. Centuries ago, he started his mortal existence as a xvart somewhere in the wild Flanaess, long before the wars between the Baklunish and Suloise and even before elven recorded history. By virtue of his strength and wit, Raxivort rose to leadership over all the xvarts in the world, or so the story goes. Not satisfied with this achievement, Raxivort strove for more power, somehow contacting creatures from the outer planes and eventually communicating with Graz'zt. The xvart found his way into the demon's good graces, presumably by doing a service for him, and in

return he was granted certain powers and appointed Master of Slaves on Graz'zt's abyssal layer. The cunning xvart pretended to be gracious, all the while biding his time and concealing his true intentions.

After several centuries, the cunning Raxivort accumulated enough trust and power to loot Graz'zt's treasury and use the arsenal he found within to attempt to wrest control of the whole layer from its master. The battle between Raxivort and Graz'zt lasted for months, with neither side gaining the upper hand. Raxivort finally proposed a truce and left the Abyss for Pandemonium, giving up the part of Graz'zt's plane he'd taken, but carting away great treasure and magic. He took control of the Black Sewers on Pandemonium and reasserted himself as lord of all the xvarts.

Raxivort's Avatar

(Cleric 8, Fighter 12, Mage 6, Thief 10)

Raxivort's avatar looks like an incredibly ugly xvart: a creature with bright blue skin and glowing orange eyes. His features are grotesque and large. He wears silken garments over blue chain-mail, all of which shimmer as if aflame, and he usually carries small, bladed weapons such as knives and daggers, as well as a small falchion.

Raxivort can also take the form of a rat (normal or giant) or a mobat. He sometimes uses magic to appear as a human, a demihuman, or even a humanoid.

AC -1; MV 12 (Fly 14 as mobat); hp 246; THAC0 9; #AT 4; Dmg 1d6+11 (falchion) or 1d4+10 (thrown daggers); MR 40%; SZ S (4' tall); Str 18/00, Dex 20, Con 18, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 3.

Spells P: 5/5/4/3 W: 4/2/2

Saves: PPDM 7, RSW 9, PP 8, BW 8, Sp 10

Special Att/Def: Raxivort can throw knives, daggers, and short swords with equal skill, gaining a +4 bonus to hit. He usually carries at least a dozen such weapons, which strike as +4 magical items when he hurls them. He also bears a size-S falchion called "Azure Razor" that acts as a +5 weapon and can paralyze one specific kind of creature on a successful strike. The weapon activates on command, remaining active

for 1d6 hours before it goes dormant for a day, whereupon it can be commanded to paralyze a different type of creature.

Raxivort also has the power to generate a blue blaze from his left hand. Combining the power of both fire and acid, the blaze fans out into a cone 20 feet long and 20 feet wide at its terminus. Any creatures caught in this deadly combination of fire and acid must make two saving throws vs. spell or suffer the full 5d4 points of damage. If both saving throws succeed, the victims suffer half damage. The xvart lord can use this power once every 4 rounds up to six times a day. Using it lowers the number of additional attacks he's allowed in a round to 2.

Raxivort is usually accompanied by a large group of xvart fighters. He can summon a pack of 5-100 rats or a swarm of 10-40 mobats by simply willing it. These creatures obey his mental commands to the letter.

Other Manifestations

Raxivort has been known to appear simply as a flaming, insubstantial blue hand (usually above a brazier). He can appear as a typical rat or normal bat as well. Sometimes he makes his evil presence known with the horrible smell of burning bat guano.

The Church

Clergy: Clerics, specialty priests, shamans, witch doctors

Clergy's Alignment: CE

Turn Undead: Clerics: no, specialty priests: no, shamans: no, witch doctors: no

Command Undead: Clerics: yes, specialty priests: yes, shamans: yes, witch doctors: no

Raxivort is worshiped primarily by xvarts. A few wererats and werebats also worship him, though he doesn't seem to notice them and grants no spells to such creatures. Raxivort's church is not tolerated in most good states, and services to him are considered a crime (as they often involve sentient sacrifices). The god was once worshiped in the southern Hold of the Sea Princes in the Duchy of Berghof by the xvarts that were prevalent in that area. It is also suspected that xvarts living in Iuz's lands secretly worship the Packmaster of Rats. There are likely temples to the god in the Pomarj and the Bone March.



Temples to Raxivort are usually crude affairs, almost always underground. A statue of the god, usually crudely made, stands somewhere in the temple. If precious metals can be found and worked into such a statue, they will be. If not, the xvarts use whatever they can find. Regardless of the design, the statue is painted with bright, garish colors. Bat guano is burned during ceremonies to the Night Flutterer, so the temple often has a rank smell.

Shamans are the most common priests of Raxivort, and they usually vie for power with the chiefs of tribes (though they always work together with the chiefs against non-xvarts). Witch doctors have a place in what little hierarchy the church has, below the shaman.

Dogma: The main belief of the church of Raxivort is that might makes right. Shamans teach that if xvarts are not strong enough to defeat their opponents, they should do what any sane creature would do—get more xvarts. If this is not possible, patience must be exhibited, though it is a hard, boring lesson. The survival of the tribe is the most important lesson that the shamans try to impart to other xvarts. If the tribe is threatened, it must do anything it can to survive: lie, cheat, steal, submit, become slaves—anything. With patience, all can be rectified later.

Day-to-Day Activities: The main purpose of a shaman is to see to his or her own survival and the survival of the tribe (in that order). Shamans use their magic to help the tribe without weakening it. Xvarts harmed in battle are

treated on a “least hurt/first healed” basis, allowing the most to return to combat quickest.

Holy Days/Important Ceremonies: The only holy days dedicated to Raxivort include the spring and autumn equinoxes (Coldeven 25 and Harvester 25), which coincide with the mating seasons of xvarts. Other holy days take place whenever the tribe can find a suitable sacrifice.

Major Centers of Worship: It is rumored that a large temple dedicated to Raxivort lies in the Drachensgrab Mountains in the Pomarj. Only the xvarts know its exact whereabouts.

Affiliated Orders: There are no affiliated orders to the church of Raxivort, though sometimes the occasional wererat allies itself with a tribe.

Priestly Vestments: Shamans of Raxivort wear a specially designed set of stilts that elevate them to the height of 5 feet. Over these, they wear long black robes. The final priestly vestment is a gold or copper gilded mask that completely covers the face and is designed to look like a hideous xart visage.

Adventuring Garb: Shamans still wear black robes and the mask of office. They usually dispense with the stilts in the field.

Specialty Priests (Towerers)

Requirements: Dexterity 14

Prime Requisites: Dexterity, Wisdom

Alignment: CE

Weapons: Any

Armor: Any

Major Spheres: All, Animal, Charm, Combat, Elemental Fire, Healing, Protection

Minor Spheres: War

Required Proficiencies: None

Bonus Proficiencies: None

- Only xvarts can become towerers.
- Towerers gain the ability to balance perfectly on stilts.

• At 3rd level, towerers can cast *find familiar* as a 1st-level priest spell, attracting either a rat or a bat.

• At 5th level, towerers can cast a blue *burning hands* once per day for every three levels of experience.

• At 7th level, towerers can cast *stinking cloud* once per day.

• At 10th level, towerers can cast *cloudkill* once per day.

SOTILLON

(Lady Harvest, Queen of Ease)
Lesser Power of Ysgard, CG(CN)

Portfolio: Summer, ease, comfort

Aliases: None

Domain Name: Ysgard/The Green Fields

Superior: Velnus (father)

Allies: Atroa, Telchur, Velnus

Foes: Kurell

Symbol: Scythe cutting wheat

Worshipers' Alignment: CG, CN

Sotillon (SAW-till-on) is the daughter of Velnus and the twin sister of Atroa. The sisters look nothing alike; though Sotillon looks older, she is actually slightly younger than her sister. All that Atroa plants, Sotillon supposedly harvests. The legends say, however, that when she was first born, Sotillon talked Kurell into doing the harvesting for her. The two sisters rarely agree but are not hostile to one another.

Sotillon is the goddess of the harvest and the bringer of summer. She is also concerned with comfort and satisfaction. Her worshipers would rather while away the warm summer days relaxing instead of doing chores. Some say Sotillon is the embodiment of laziness (unlike the hard-working priests of Atroa), though neither she nor her followers seem to care.

Sotillon's Avatar

(Mage 20, Cleric 15, Thief 10)

Sotillon appears as a lovely young woman of about twenty-five with wild red hair down to her shoulders. She is quite beautiful and wears loose, comfortable clothing, usually a toga. A sickle hangs from her belt, and her scythe is always somewhere nearby (usually leaning against something or floating behind her if she is moving). Both weapons look brand new. Sotillon rarely, if ever, engages in combat, usually persuading someone else to do her fighting for her.

AC -2; MV 12; hp 140; THAC0 12; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+4 (sickle) and 1d8+11 (scythe); MR 50%; SZ M (5' tall); Str 14, Dex 19, Con 18, Int 20, Wis 20, Cha 23.

Spells P: 9/9/8/8/4/2/1 W:

5/5/5/5/4/3/3/2

Saves: PPDM 5, RSW 5, PP 7, BW 9, Sp 6

Special Att/Def: If forced into combat, Sotillon wields her *sickle* +3 (which acts as a *vorpal blade*) and whistles loudly for the scythe. The *scythe* +2 fights by itself (THAC0 -6, #AT 3, Dmg 1d8+11). This weapon is called *Deshaan* (an old Oeridian word meaning "helper"). The *scythe* is sentient and quite intelligent, doing all in its power to protect Sotillon. The *scythe* is indestructible and immune to all damage. Only a *banishment* spell can make it stop attacking its present target (though it chooses another the next round). The weapon neither speaks nor acknowledges mortals in any way.

Sotillon can cast *charm person* at will, usually using the ability to get others to do something for her (including fight). Sotillon's *charm* ability is very strong (imposing a -3 penalty to saving throws) and affects even elves. She can also cast a *sleep* spell that affects any group of 2d4 creatures of any level. The slumber is blissful and relaxing. Regardless of how much time is spent asleep, it is as restorative as a full night's rest, though those waking from it require 1d6 rounds to get their bearings again.

Finally, Sotillon can cast an unwaking slumber on whomever she chooses. This effect (against which the victim must make a saving throw vs. spell at a -10 penalty) places a person into a deep sleep for up to 100 years. Sometimes Sotillon decides how long the sleep lasts or chooses certain conditions that must be met for the sleeper to awaken. The sleeper ages normally while asleep, but has no need for food or water. Normal animals and even monsters avoid the sleeper, because Sotillon's wrath often falls on those who injure the defenseless individuals.

Other Manifestations

Sotillon sometimes makes her presence known by a warm breeze, either blowing on her subject or making odd ripples in a nearby field of wheat, grass, or hay. An unusually comfortable spot such as a field of comfortable grass, a round hollow spot on the side of a tree branch, or even a rock shaped perfectly for sitting, are all thought of as places blessed by Sotillon. Pillows found where none should be (beside the road for example) are obvious signs of this

deity. Finding a comfortable place where none should be (hard ground, for example) is probably a sign that Sotillon is watching.

The Church

Clergy: Clerics, specialty priests, bards

Clergy's Alignment: CG, CN

Turn Undead: Cleric: no, specialty priest: no, bard: no

Command Undead: Cleric: no, specialty priest: no, bard: no

Sotillon's temples can be found in Ket, Keoland, Bissel, Blackmoor (though only rarely), the County of Urnst, the remains of the Great Kingdom, and along the Oeridian migration routes. Small shrines or statues of the deity can sometimes be found in the common rooms of inns and indicate that great comfort can be found in that house. A few natural places of worship exist outdoors (usually in southern Keoland or the Great Kingdom) in spots thought "blessed by Sotillon."

Temples to the deity are very plush and comfortable. There are no benches or hard pews in such temples. Instead, well-padded chairs made of the most comfortable (though not necessarily most expensive) fabrics stand in the worship hall. The temples are built with many windows for letting in the summer air and many fireplaces to keep it warm and cozy in the winter. No expense is spared to make sure that the worshipers are comfortable. Some temples even forgo furniture altogether, relying instead on mattresses and blankets on the floor and allowing their worshipers to relax however they want. Statues to Sotillon always depict her lounging.

There are no sects in the church, as such divisions are too much trouble and likely to create discomfort among the priests.

Dogma: Followers of Sotillon are concerned with their personal comfort and the comfort of those around them. Thus, their philosophy is to help others without making themselves uncomfortable. Priests are taught to find comfort in every activity.

The other main aspect of Sotillon taught by the church is her ability to bring summer to the world. The time coincides with harvest, and priests learn



to help with the harvest in ways that do not discomfort them. If this is not possible, they are taught to find ways to comfort the common folk who bring in the harvest. Priests use song or dance to entertain their followers after a hard day's work.

Day-to-Day Activities: Resting, music, philosophy, and thought. Priests of Sotillon take the term "relaxed" to its height, trying to find a way to do things comfortably or not at all. Many write poetry or epic plays, while others practice music. Most use their magic to easily gain money for the church.

Lazy as this might seem, the priests of Sotillon are quick to eliminate the threat of discomfort. Be it an early frost that might make them or their followers go hungry, or an invading army that threatens the quality of life, Sotillon's priests will be there to lend a hand, no matter how uncomfortable it might make them for a short time. Though they rarely plan far ahead, they are wise enough to see a future threat to their own ease.

Holy Days/Important Ceremonies: Regular ceremonies are held by the church every other Godsday. These are usually quiet, short services consisting mostly of light singing or the playing of stringed instruments. It is thought to be the greatest of compliments for a parishioner to fall asleep during the ceremony.

Harvest time in Reaping and the festival of Richfest are both sacred times for the followers of Sotillon, although they spend more time celebrating than they do in the fields. They try to make

those who do work in the fields as comfortable as possible.

Bedtime is the holiest time of day to a priest of Sotillon.

Major Centers of Worship: The Cathedral of Delight, in Niole Dra in the Kingdom of Keoland, is the grandest of Sotillon's temples. This huge structure was built 678 years ago by the followers of Telchur, but the endeavor drove the church in that land into bankruptcy. The priests of Sotillon purchased the building from the city and refurbished it to their own liking. The huge, octagonal main temple has some of the most beautiful stained glass in the country (if not the world), and dwarven mechanisms were added over two hundred years ago to allow all of them to be opened at once by the pull of a single lever. Thick rugs and carpets abound, as well as comfortable chairs and divans. The main temple can hold over five hundred people for ceremonies, each of them comfortably seated. A huge, marble statue of Sotillon, fast asleep on a couch, presides over the whole place.

Affiliated Orders: The only group even loosely associated with the church is a fraternity of bards called the Soothers.

This new but growing order sells their services to those who have trouble sleeping at night, using their song and light music to lull insomniacs to slumber. Sometimes they play during worship services.

Priestly Vestments: Clergy of Sotillon wear loose, comfortable clothing, usually robes of bright blue and green. The material is lightweight and comfortable, often made of silk. These robes tend to billow out at the sleeves and feet, easing walking or movement when at rest. Comfortable shoes fill out the garb, as does a wide-brimmed hat (also green or blue) to keep the sun from one's eyes.

Adventuring Garb: Priests of Sotillon wear the same colors as their vestments, though the cut of the robes is somewhat shorter to allow more freedom of action.

Specialty Priests (Luxuriates)

Requirements: Charisma 15

Prime Requisites: Wisdom, Charisma

Alignment: CG, CN

Weapons: Blunt weapons, dagger, sickle, and small, easily learned and used weapons (such as a light crossbow)

Armor: None

Major Spheres: All, Chaos, Charm,

Creation, Healing, Plant, Protection .

Minor Spheres: Time

Required Proficiencies: Etiquette

Bonus Proficiencies: Dancing or Singing (choose one).

- Any nonhumans can join the church of Sotillon, though dwarves almost never do. Halflings and elves usually find the church especially pleasant.

- Luxuriates sleep soundly and require only 6 hours of sleep for a full night's rest (though they usually take more).

- At 3rd level, luxuriates can cast *Sleep* once per day.

- At 6th level, luxuriates can cast *Leomund's tiny hut* once per day.

- At 8th level, luxuriates can cast *Leomund's secure shelter* once per day.

- At 15th level, luxuriates can cast *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion* once per day.

Aside from the brief appearance of a priest of Celestian, the clerics in Andy's GREYHAWK campaigns have been priests of Greek gods. He hopes these articles help change that.

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The Cult of Simon Audaire



by James Wyatt

Illustrated by Scott Rosema

FROM THE JOURNAL OF GENNIFER FOXGROVE-WEATHERMAY:

Today, Laurie and I discovered what must be an early draft of Uncle Rudolph's *Guide to the Ancient Dead*. The manuscript consists of a single chapter entitled "Houses of the Dead." In the section dealing with mummy cults, I noticed one paragraph that does not appear in the published version. Apparently, Uncle Rudolph began writing and then thought better of it, crossing out what he had written with a single, clean line. The stricken sentences read: "The city of Ste. Ronges in Richemulot, not far from my residence in Mordentshire, is well known for the rats and other vermin that infest its sewers. Rumor has it that all of the cities in the realm of Richemulot are plagued by wererats. A learned colleague of mine in Ste. Ronges, however, has suggested that a cult dedicated to exterminating the wererats operates in the sewers and catacombs of his home city—and that the leader of the cult is actually one of the ancient dead."



Simon Audaire, The Mummy of Saint Ronges

Lycanthropy and murder are two traits that most female members of the Renier family in Richemulot share. The lycanthropy is passed from mother to child, and fathers tend to disappear from the equation. Marie Renier, mother of Richemulot's wererat ruler Jacqueline, murdered her husband and passed her maiden name to her many children. Twenty-two years later, Jacqueline followed this morbid family tradition, killing her husband and passing her name on to her wererat children.

This combination of traits in the Renier line has produced some troubled Renier men. So troubled, it seems, that some of them at least would take life and death into their own hands to give themselves some advantage over their wererat cousins. The result: the Mummy of Ste. Ronges.

When Marie Renier murdered her husband, Simon Audaire, in 710 (in the Barovian calendar), Audaire's loyal manservant Luc carried the body to Ste. Ronges, where he had the body properly embalmed and laid to rest in the catacombs beneath the city. Twenty-five years later, two of Simon's young nephews, the twins Pierre and Gerard Renier, made their own journey into the catacombs of Ste. Ronges. The twins had escaped the curse of lycanthropy by virtue of having a normal human mother, but Pierre and Gerard still suffered from the affliction of being Reniers, and perhaps this alone was enough to drive them to the madness that they apparently suffered.

In 735, Pierre and Gerard gathered some of their many male cousins and nephews, and in the catacombs beneath



Ste. Ronges they made a dark pact with some nameless power. In exchange for their devotion, this dark force returned Simon Audaire's spirit to his body, animating it with an unholy spark of energy and imbuing it with powers both horrifying and deadly.

Simon Audaire is now a mummy, and a power in Richemulot that might someday rival that of the Darklord, Jacqueline Renier. With his adoring cult of lesser male Reniers, Simon plots against his wererat relatives, seeking some means to bring the human side of the family to power.

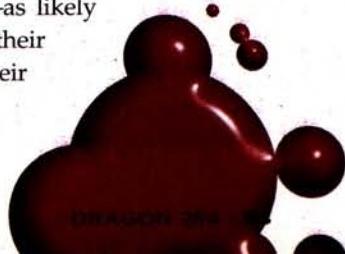
Audaire's skeletal frame is covered with leathery skin stretched tight over his bones. He wears elegant finery suggesting the height of fashion in Richemulot forty years ago—black silk breeches and waistcoat, with white stockings and a ruffed white shirt. His black hair is still thick on his desiccated scalp, and he wears it in the fashionable style, pulled back into a ponytail and tied with a black ribbon. He carries an elegant sword cane—his preferred weapon in life—but attacks now with the far deadlier weapon of his touch. His fingernails are

long and sharp, yet well tended.

Simon Audaire, 3rd Rank mummy: INT Average (9); AL LE; AC 3; MV 9; HD 7; hp 40; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 2-16; SA Fear (fourth rank), disease (fourth rank), rat form 3/day, summon horde of rats; SD +1 or better weapon to hit, half damage from any weapon (plus full magical bonus), immune to cold and nonmagical fire, -3 penalty to turning attempts; SW susceptible to electricity, suffers 1d6+1 point of damage from holy water; SZ M (5'7"); ML Champion (15). Simon has infravision to a range of 30 feet. If defeated in combat, Simon needs to rest for only 12 hours before he begins to rejuvenate, regaining 12 hp per hour. When the rejuvenation process is done, Simon must rest an additional hour. Simon's Strength score is 18/00. He possesses thief abilities as a vestige from his mortal days: PP 10%, OL 20%, F/RT 50%, MS 90%, HS 43%, DN 25%, CW 44%, RL 35%.

The Cult of Simon Audaire: Pierre and Gerard Renier

The twins Pierre and Gerard Renier are the masterminds behind the cult of Simon Audaire. Pierre, a sullen, sneaky man with a penchant for solitude, is a thief of no mean ability. Gerard, more outgoing and social than his twin, is an accomplished swordsman turned evil priest. Both are criminal geniuses scheming against their lycanthropic cousins using the mummy as a powerful weapon. They treat Simon cautiously, viewing him (rightly) as something like an arquebus—as likely to explode in their faces as slay their enemies.





Pierre Renier

Gerard Renier

Pierre Renier, human T7: AL NE; AC 5 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 30; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6+2/1d4+2 (rapier and main-gauche—see sidebar); SA backstab; SD parry instead of second attack; SZ M (5'5"); ML Average (10); Str 11, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 12. PP 55%, OL 60%, F/RT 50%, MS 60%, HS 60%, DN 25%, CW 94%, RL 35%.

Gerard Renier, human P5: AL LE; AC 7 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 28; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (saber);

SA spells; SD spells, thief skills; SZ M (5'6"); ML Steady (12); Str 12, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 12. As a priestly granted power, Gerard can Hide in Shadows and Move Silently with a 25% chance of success. The dark powers have seen fit to grant Gerard a limited complement of priestly spells in exchange for his devotion to this created god, feeding him the power he craves. He has access to the following spheres of priest spells: All, Animal,

Charm, Necromantic (reversed only), and Sun (reversed only). He cannot turn or command undead in a normal fashion, though he has complete command of the mummy of Simon Audaire. When he uses the *animate dead* spell, he creates minor mummies rather than the usual skeletons or zombies. Each use of the spell creates two minor mummies.

Minor mummies (first rank): INT Non (0); AL LE; AC 5; MV 6; HD 2; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SA fear, disease (second rank); SD silver or magical weapon to hit, immune to cold; SW susceptible to fire and electricity, holy water inflicts 2d4 points of damage; SZ M; ML Champion (15). If they are not destroyed, these minor mummies regain 5 hp per day of rest after the first week. Once healed, they must rest for an additional day. They have infravision to a range of 30 feet and Strength scores of 18/76.

Ward Against Wererats

(Abjuration)

Sphere: Wards

Level: 3

Range: 0

Components: S, M

Duration: Special

Casting Time: 3 turns

Area of Effect: 1 portal

Saving Throw: None

This magical sigil, when inscribed onto a door or other portal, prevents wererats from passing through. A wererat who touches the *warded* portal suffers a jolt of electricity that inflicts 1d8 points of damage per level of the caster, with no saving

throw. When the *ward* is triggered, its magic dissipates and the wererat—if still alive—is able to pass freely.

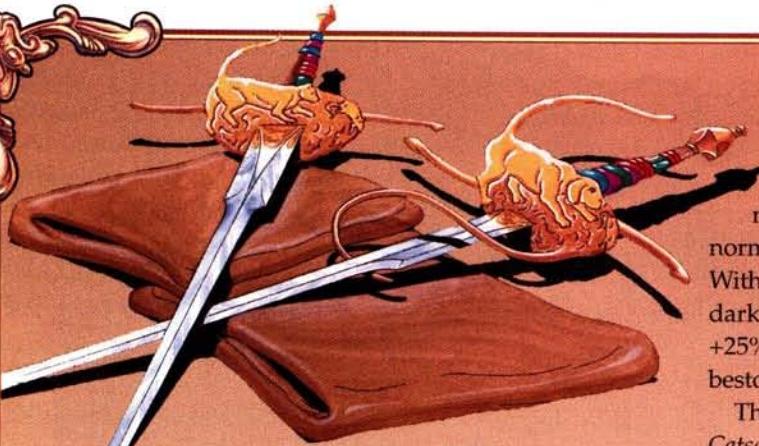
To cast this spell, the priest must carefully inscribe its complex patterns into the portal to be protected. The priest must then inlay its lines with a gemstone powder made from an amber stone worth at least 100 gp and a tiny portion of a jacinth. A single jacinth can be used for up to ten *wards*, while a complete amber stone is needed for each *ward*.

The spell lasts until the ward is triggered. Other wards certainly exist to ward off other lycanthrope types, varying both in the pattern of the sigil and in the mineral required for the inlay.

The Catacombs of Saint Ronges

Richemulot is known for its elaborate sewers, but alongside these underground channels of running water is a mazework of catacombs. Generally, the entrances to the catacombs are found in the sewers—they are large stone doors inscribed with holy symbols and wards, calling down curses upon those who would defile the dead. Most of these wards have no power in themselves, but defiling a grave by looting a body or the like is cause for a powers check. The doors are locked, and only the priests and governors of the city have keys. The locks are complex enough to impose a -20% penalty to any attempt to pick them. Gerard and Pierre Renier have each acquired a copy of the key that opens the section where Luc interred Simon Audaire's body.





Dogstooth and Catsclaw

Pierre's rapier and main-gauche were forged in Falkovnia by an old enemy of the Renier wererats. The rapier is called *Dogstooth*, the main-gauche *Catsclaw*. Both are fashioned from enchanted silver, and their hilt bells are ornately crafted in the shape of animals (dogs and cats, respectively) hunting rats.

Dogstooth is a rapier +2, +4 vs. wererats. With a command word ("licht"), it sheds a bright light in a 15' radius around the wielder that automatically reveals any character or creature trying to Hide in Shadows. When sheathed, the sword makes a barking sound if a wererat—in any form—approaches within 30 feet.

Catsclaw is a main-gauche +2, +5 vs. rats. Its higher enchantment does not apply to wererats, only to normal and giant rats (as well as other more-or-less normal rat varieties, such as cloud rats or cranium rats). With a command word ("schatten"), it emits a blanket of dark shadows in a 15' radius around the wielder, adding +25% to the wielder's ability to Hide in Shadows or bestowing that ability with a 25% chance of success.

The wielder cannot use *Dogstooth*'s light power and *Catsclaw*'s shadow power simultaneously. When drawn and another command word is spoken ("ratte"), *Catsclaw* immediately points in the direction of the closest wererat, regardless of the form the creature is in. The wielder receives no indication of how far away the wererat is, and the maximum range of this effect is 1 mile.

By holding the two weapons, one in each hand, and speaking another command word ("rein"), the wielder can create a zone of sweet air in a 50' radius around the caster. As with the spell (described in the *Tome of Magic*), this area repels noxious vapors—including stinking cloud spells and the odor of the sewers, but not green dragon breath. Any vapors already in the area when the power is activated are not affected. If a stinking cloud or similar spell is cast within the zone, it dissipates in half the normal amount of time.





Gerard has inscribed a new sigil on this door, as well: a *ward against wererats*. This potent magical protection prevents wererats from passing through the portal, sending electricity searing through its body if such a creature touches the door.

The accompanying map shows a portion of Ste. Ronges' catacombs. The catacombs are pitch dark, and the passages are barely 5 feet wide and 6 feet tall. The air is thickly humid and foul smelling, thanks to the proximity of the sewers. The passages intersect at odd angles, with the intention of maximizing available space. Bodies—or sometimes only the bones of a cremated body—are laid to rest in small niches along the walls, often stacked three high.

The Renier family—or the branch of it that is connected with Ste. Ronges—has its own wing in this expanse of catacombs. A narrow tunnel leading westward ends in a small circular chamber, about 10 feet in diameter, with a ceiling that arches up to a spacious height of 8 feet. The name Renier is inscribed on the floor in fluid lettering, and four short

tunnels lead outward to hold the bodies of this illustrious family. In the rightmost tunnel as one enters this chamber, one niche bears the name "Simon Audaire" and holds a moldering jumble of human bones. The skeleton is not Simon's, of course. Crawling into the niche and speaking the phrase, "We are become as dead men," causes the back wall of this niche to slide away, revealing a narrow tunnel leading downward, with a ladder set in the wall.

The ladder descends 50 feet before ending in the Rat-Mummy's temple. Gerard's obscene cult gathers in this temple to worship their mummified leader. It is a large circular chamber, 40 feet in diameter, with a domed ceiling peaking at 20 feet high. Five braziers are set around the outside wall, and a waist-high wooden rail surrounds a 15'-wide pit in the middle of the chamber. Looking down into the pit, one sees the staring eyes of Simon Audaire as he rests in his glass, lidless coffin. Directly opposite the ladder leading back up to the catacombs and overlooking the pit, a 6' x 3' x 3' black altar is built out from the railing. Gerard uses this altar to offer human or wererat sacrifices to his uncle.

Behind the altar, a secret door leads to another ladder, this one descending to give access to the coffin below. Simon climbs up the ladder at least as often as Gerard climbs down. Beyond the ladder on the main temple level, a narrow passage gives access to Gerard's obscene vestry. Here he stores the ghastly red and black robes and other accouterments he uses while performing the foul rites that maintain his uncle in undeath. These objects include candlesticks with holders, censers and incense, a gold-inlaid wererat skull, and a collection of eight sacrificial knives. These knives are superficially identical, but each is crafted from a different material: silver, cold-forged iron, oak, juniper, petrified wood, flint, bone (from a great cat), and obsidian. In a pinch, these knives can be useful against a variety of lycanthropes, each inflicting 1d4 points of damage (or 1d3 against a large creature) against a werebeast that is susceptible to its material.

Censer of Undead Might

A finely crafted golden censer, this magical item lends power to the undead. When loaded with incense made from acacia, any undead creature within 15

feet of the *censer* gains 1 HD, and saving throws vs. any of its attack forms are made at a -2 penalty. On the other hand (and unknown to the mummy cult that uses this *censer*), if incense made from cinnamon is burned in the *censer*, the effects are reversed. Any undead creature within a 15' radius of the *censer* in this case loses 1 HD, and saving throws vs. its attacks are made at a +2 bonus.

Battling the Cult

In an effort to learn more about the mummy of Saint Ronges Uncle alluded to in early drafts of his Guide to the Ancient Dead, Laurie and I have discovered a sheaf of papers related to that city. These papers consist mainly of letters from one Laurent Desnier—whom I can only assume to be the "learned colleague" who informed Uncle of the Saint Ronges mummy. Among these letters, we uncovered what appears to be an herbal formula for a salve intended to prevent the spread of disease. We have concocted a batch from ingredients we were able to find in Uncle's herbalist shop, but we earnestly hope we shall never have cause to test it.

Salve of Curing

Make a poultice with deadly nightshade, hyssop, and water lily held together in red clay gathered from a riverbank during the full moon. Heat the clay mixture and apply it to wounds. Sprinkle dried sage leaves on a linen bandage and wrap the bandage around the poultice, so the sage faces the skin. The wound will heal quickly, without infection.

At the DM's option, the *salve of curing* can have any of these effects:

- ◆ The *salve* prevents ordinary infection but nothing more; the patient recovers as if under the care of an herbalist. It has no effect against magical diseases, including mummy rot and lycanthropy.

- ◆ The *salve* prevents both ordinary diseases and lycanthropy.

- ◆ The *salve* prevents both ordinary diseases and mummy rot.

- ◆ Not only is the *salve* completely ineffective against disease and infection, it is potentially harmful to the patient. The patient must make a successful saving throw vs. poison each day the *salve* is

applied, with failure indicating that the patient suffers 1d4 points of damage. Even if this saving throw is successful, the patient does not regain any hit points while the *salve* is applied.

- ◆ Immersion in the *ointment* inflicts the same damage on a mummy as a vial of holy water.

- ◆ A vial of the *ointment* inflicts the same damage on a *mummy* as a vial of holy water. Immersion in the *ointment* destroys the mummy's body, though rejuvenation remains possible.

- ◆ The *ointment* drains two life energy levels from the first living creature to touch the stuff. Undead are unaffected.

- ◆ The *ointment* restores a mummy to full hit points immediately.

In addition to the healing salve, there is a concoction described in these pages that I shudder to even contemplate creating, let alone use. The very concept of this ointment of decay fills my heart with revulsion, and yet my mind understands how such a thing might prove tremendously useful in battling a mummy such as the one that these letters describe.



Ointment of Decay

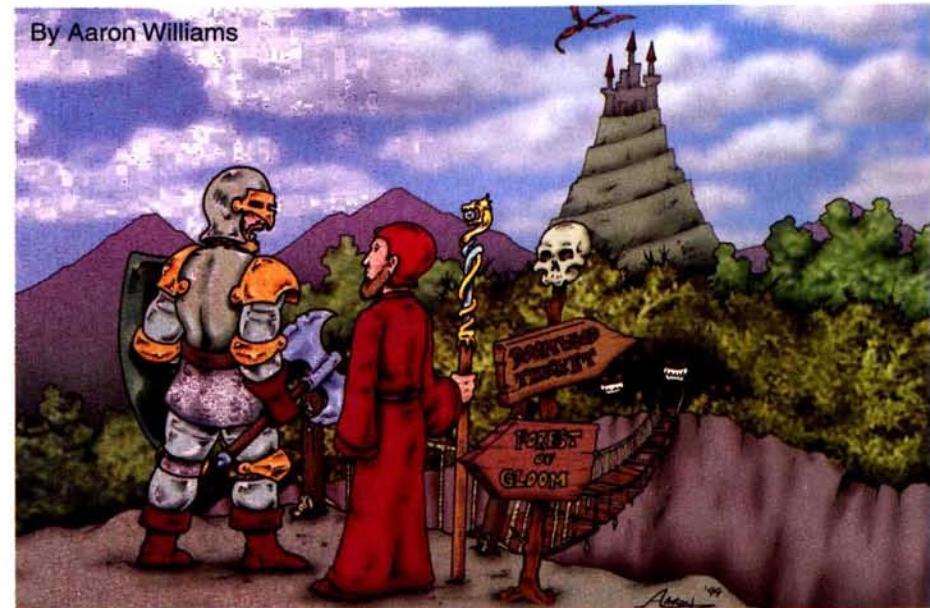
Combine water from a sewer with either the blood of a vampire or the ichor of a spectre, wraith, or ghost. Bathe a mummified corpse in this mixture, and the process of mummification will be reversed. Within days, the skin and organs of the mummy will rot and slough away. In the case of an animated mummy, the *ointment* severs the mummy's connection to the Positive Material Plane, destroying its life essence immediately.

At the DM's option, the *ointment* might work exactly as described, or instead can have one of the following effects:

I think perhaps I have discovered why Uncle Rudolph struck that paragraph from his Guide to the Ancient Dead. Among the letters from this Laurent Desnier, I discovered a letter informing Uncle that his friend Desnier was committed to Dr. Illhousen's Clinic for the Mentally Distressed in Egertus. According to the letter, Dr. Illhousen diagnosed the patient as suffering from severe delusions and advised that any information Desnier offered should be considered the ravings of a madman. A member of Richemulot's ruling family signed the letter, one Pierre Renier.

James Wyatt was good enough not to stalk the editors at this year's GEN CON® game fair, but we still take pains to avoid the sewer grates. You can't be too careful.

By Aaron Williams



"Y'know, I'd enjoy my job a whole lot more if it weren't for the darned commute!"

Rubies sparkled blood red
in the light of the
dying flames.

Fire light
flashed on
a steel blade.



Fiction by
Margaret Weis
& Don Perrin

Based on the world and characters
created by Larry Elmore

Shadamehr and the Old Wives Tale

Begging your pardon, good sir," said the barkeep deferentially, "but this note is for you."

"For me?" The man thus addressed was considerably amazed. "But I am a stranger in these parts! I am merely passing through on my way east. Surely you have made a mistake." He waved the note away. "This must be for someone else."

"I do not think I could be mistaken, sir," said the barkeep with a cunning look. "You have graced my tavern with your presence these three days now, being kind enough to say that my mead is the best in the area—"

"And so it is," said the man, interrupting.

The barkeep bowed and continued. "And thus I have come to know you, sir, very well, as have many of my patrons, for you have been most generous in buying rounds for the house."

The man smiled in a self-deprecating manner and smoothed the ends of a very long and very black mustache. He winked at his companion, a young woman with thick red curly hair, bound up in a coil at the base of her neck. She wore the plain brown robes of one who practices earth magic.

"Therefore," said the barkeep, "when a note is delivered to me to be given to a person of a certain description that matches you most wonderfully, sir, I am left with no doubts."

"What would that description be?" the man asked, his eyes glinting with amusement. "Let us hear it."

"This is what I was told: 'He is a human male of middle years with a nose like an hawk's beak, a chin like an ax-blade, eyes blue as the skies above New Vinnengael and a long, black mustache of which he is very proud and is constantly smoothing or twirling. In addition, he has long black hair, which he wears bound in a tail at the back of his head, in the manner of the elves.'"

"Bah! That could be anyone," said the man.

"He is very handsome—" continued the barkeep solemnly.

"Oh, then, you are right. That is me," said the man calmly and he plucked the message from the barkeep's hand.

"You are insufferable, Shadamehr," said his companion in a low voice.

"You are only jealous, Alise," Shadamehr said as he broke the seal and unfolded the note. The two spoke in elven, a

language which no one in the Karnuan city was likely to understand. "Jealous that no one sent the beautiful human female with the red hair a mysterious missive."

His companion rolled her eyes and shook her head.

"I trust this note means that our generous hospitality has finally paid off," Shadamehr said. "At last we are about to receive some information. I don't mind telling you that I am growing sick to death of mead."

Reading the note, he appeared puzzled, then gratified. "Here now! I never expected this." He handed the note to his companion.

Doubtless you do not remember me, my lord, but we were companions in our youth. I was an acolyte with the Revered Magi at the time you were in training as a knight. We met through the unfortunate circumstance of our each falling in love with the same woman at the same time. I shall never forget the tricks we played on each other as rivals, tricks that turned out to be for naught, when she married a third man neither of us had known about. Our rivalry became friendship, a friendship that was severed when you left Vinnengael in anger over the policies of the Emperor and I left to return to my homeland to take up my duties for the Church.

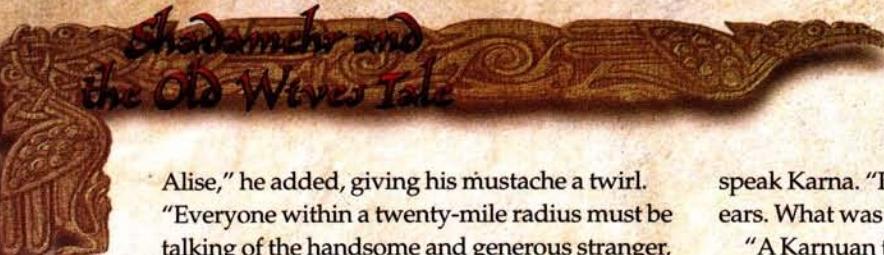
I have followed the tales of your exploits with the deepest pleasure and, although you travel under another name, when I heard from a traveler of a generous stranger with hair as black as midnight, a nose like a hawk, and a laugh that booms like a mountain slide, I knew there could only be one. I am certain the gods have sent you. I believe that you come in answer to my prayers.

You will recall that I was particularly sensitive to the evil magic of the Void. I dare not write more in this note, for fear it will be waylaid. I live in the town of Cunac, about twenty miles north. I beg you to come with all possible haste.

Your friend, Revered Brother Ulien.

Alise frowned. "How could he possibly have known it was you? Hundreds of miles from our homeland. I don't like this." She handed the missive back.

"Bah!" said Shadamehr with a grin. He tucked the note in his boot and beckoned the barkeep. "Our tab, please. We are leaving your fair city. Of course, Ulien would know it was me,



"Alise," he added, giving his mustache a twirl. "Everyone within a twenty-mile radius must be talking of the handsome and generous stranger, by now. And his lovely red-haired companion," he included teasingly.

He paid the bill, throwing in enough extra to cause the barkeep to sing his praises for days, and left the bar with Alise.

She snorted. "Your ego will be the death of you, Shadamehr."

"Nonsense, my dear," Shadamehr said, assisting her to mount her horse. "I will cheat death for the simple reason that all the wonderful things people say about me are true. Which is why you adore me."

He whistled to his own black steed, a horse of a vicious temperament who so terrified the stable boys that they would not come close to him. The horse whinnied in delight at the sight of his master and draped his head over Shadamehr's shoulder, almost purring with pleasure when Shadamehr rubbed his muzzle.

"I don't adore you. I don't even like you," Alise said coldly. "I don't know why I put up with you. You will get me killed someday. Get yourself killed, too, in some hare-brained scheme to set the world right when it doesn't want to go right."

Shadamehr leaned over and kissed her on the cheek before she could push him away. Then he was off at a gallop, exhibiting his riding skills to the admiring populace, who took off their hats to wave good-bye.

"I should turn around now and go back home." Alise muttered as she kicked her horse in the flanks. She was forced to ride hard and fast to catch up.



Twilight had fallen by the time the two arrived in Cunac, a small town located near the border of the human kingdoms of Karnu and Dunkarga. Once a united kingdom, the two had split apart in a civil war two hundred years earlier. As much as humans of Karnu and Dunkarga hated all those of other races in the world of Loerem, they hated each other more. The town of Cunac was notable for only one thing—it was the site of a large military outpost, built to deter the Dunkargans from crossing the border.

Strangers were not normally welcomed into Karnuan towns, but Shadamehr, with his glib tongue and his charming manner, was never a stranger anywhere long. The guard who had begun by brusquely refusing them admittance ended by embracing Shadamehr with tears in his eyes. He gave them directions to the Revered Brother's dwelling and added an invitation to come drinking in the tavern when the guard was off-duty.

"What did you tell that man?" Alise demanded. She did not

speak Karna. "I thought he was going to throw us out on our ears. What was all that hugging and kissing?"

"A Karnuan tradition when family members meet," Shadamehr said solemnly. "He is my second cousin once removed on my mother's side."

Alise stared at him. "I don't believe you!"

"Ah, but it's true, nonetheless. Someday I will explain. Let us make haste, before Revered Brother Ulien retires."

They secured rooms in the only inn in Cunac and stabled their horses. This done, they left in search of Shadamehr's childhood friend.

Brother Ulien's dwelling was a small house attached to the local temple. The brother was awake and very glad to see them.

"I would have known you anywhere, my lord," said Ulien, regarding his friend with pleasure.

"And I you," said Shadamehr with such heartiness that Alise knew he was lying.

*"Ulien
paused,
then said
in a
whisper,
"I think
we are
dealing
with a ...
vrykyl."*

"I could have walked past him in the street and never known it," he confided to her when Ulien had left to bring them food and water. "He used to be a tall, good-looking youth with curly black hair. Now he is gaunt and haggard and gone completely gray."

"He's probably saying the same thing about you," Alise said teasingly. "Especially the part about the gray."

"I am not!" Shadamehr protested. He drew forth the long black tail of hair that fell down his back and studied it by candlelight. "Am I?" His search for gray hairs was interrupted by the return of their host, who told them of his concerns over dinner.

"About a week ago, I first noticed the presence of Void magic." Ulien spoke in hushed tones, his red-rimmed eyes glancing furtively at the window as if he feared they might be overheard. "The feeling was overwhelming. I've known nothing like it. It was as if a black and noxious cloud had settled over the town. I cannot draw breath. I feel as if I am being smothered."

In truth, he gasped for breath constantly. His thin body jerked and twitched nervously at every sound.

"And you say that two strangers arrived in town at the same time?" Shadamehr asked.

"One of them a dwarf, my lord. A Fire Mage," said Ulien.

Shadamehr frowned. "I have never known a dwarf to have dealings with the Void."

Ulien gave him a sad glance, as if pitying such naivete. "He is one of the Unhorsed, most likely cast out of his clan for some terrible crime. He might well be a follower of the Void."

"Possibly," said Shadamehr, but he appeared unconvinced. "And the other?"

"A newly appointed commander of the fortress. Since Karnu is a military state," he added for Alise's benefit, "the military

commander is also the leading government agent in Cunac. He is an ordinary enough fellow, not especially bright, but he carries a most remarkable sword. The hilt is set with black and red jewels, as is the scabbard. Such a valuable sword might be worn by the Emperor of Vinnengael. What is a captain in the Karnuan army doing with it?"

"Is it tainted with Void magic?" Alise asked with interest.

"I do not know for certain, Revered Sister," Ulien answered with a shiver. "I have not been able to get close enough to find out."

"If so—and I must say that it sounds very much like a Void artifact—this would explain the sensation you are feeling," Alise said.

Ulien shook his head. "I am sorry to have to disagree with you, Sister, but I have been around powerful Void artifacts before, and I experienced nothing like this. I have been physically ill over it. I am frightened all the time. I cannot eat. I cannot sleep." He held out his hands. The long fingers trembled and shook. "You see how it is?"

"Then what do you think is causing this, Ulien?" Shadamehr demanded.

"I think ..." Ulien paused, then said in a whisper, "I think we are dealing with a ... with a vrykyl."

Ulien waited tensely for their reaction. Alise looked at Shadamehr, who hid his smile by smoothing his mustache. Ulien gave a great sigh and closed his eyes.

"I feared you would laugh at me, my lord!" he said, almost weeping.

"No, no," Shadamehr said, soothingly.

"What are vrykyl, after all, but tales made up by old women?" said Ulien. "That's what they said in the Temple in Vinnengael. That's what any sane person would say."

"Old women are wise," said Alise with a reproving glance for Shadamehr. "And the truths they keep burning bright through the years are oftentimes the only light we have to guide our footsteps when the darkness comes upon us."

"I say this to you, Ulien, for your ears alone," Shadamehr added, "but we have come to Karnu because I received information relating to the return of the vrykyl to this world."

Ulien gazed at Shadamehr in awe. "Then certainly the gods have brought us together!"

"Perhaps. Perhaps not," Shadamehr said dryly. "What is it you expect me to do?"

"Why, rid the town of this evil, of course," Ulien said.

Shadamehr shook his head. "If this is truly a vrykyl, that is a foe beyond my ability to fight. According to the old wives' tales, that is."

"It is said that perhaps a Dominion Lord could slay them," Alise remarked. "That has not been proven, however."

"But, sir, you are a Dominion Lord!" Ulien protested. "You served under a different name, but—"

Shadamehr smiled and again shook his head. "You are mistaken. I am not a Dominion Lord. I never underwent the Transfiguration."

Ulien regarded him with narrowed eyes. "The counsel voted to approve you. It was unanimous. The Emperor himself—"

"It is a long story," Shadamehr said, abruptly ending the topic of conversation. "As to the vrykyl, if they do walk this world"—he quirked an eyebrow—"they walk it safe from me. I came to gather information on them. Nothing more."

"Then we are lost," Ulien said in despair.

Shadamehr placed a kindly hand on the trembling hand of his friend. "You are weary. You have not slept in days. Alise will give you a potion to help you find rest."

Alise was already removing a small potion bottle from a belt she wore around her waist. She handed the potion to Ulien and explained the directions for its use.

"We will return in the morning," Shadamehr said, rising to his feet. "I would like to meet this dwarf and the commander. You will point them out to me. Goodnight, Ulien. Rest well."

"I will try, my lord," Ulien said unhappily. He held tightly to the potion.



Vrykyl!" Alise repeated the word accusingly, as soon as they were well away from Ulien's house. "So this is why you brought me!"

"And you thought it was for your red hair," said Shadamehr.

Alise gave a little sigh, which he did not hear, for he was humming a dance tune to himself. The town's streets were empty. Windows in the houses were dark and shuttered. All the inhabitants were decently abed. Or perhaps not all.

"After all, you are the acknowledged expert—What was that?" Shadamehr asked suddenly, stopping and turning his head.

"What was what?" Alise said. She had been walking the street abstracted, absorbed in her own thoughts.

"Someone passed us," said Shadamehr. "He was keeping to the shadows, but I caught a glimpse of him in the moonlight."

"A vrykyl?" Alise asked with a slight curl of her lip.

"No," said Shadamehr, continuing to stare behind him. "A dwarf. And he was headed in the direction of Ulien's house."

"Which is the same direction as the city gate," said Alise in exasperation. "And the barracks. And the six ale houses we passed on our way. You know how restless dwarves are. He might be out for a nighty stroll."

"That's true," said Shadamehr, but he did not move.

"If you want to traipse after him, do so," Alise said in exasperation. "But I am bone-tired. I mean to sleep until noon."

"He's gone. I don't see him." Shadamehr turned back and fell into step beside her. "You are probably right. Now, tell me all you know about vrykyl."

"I gave you my report in writing, my lord," Alise returned.

"Ah, but you know that I am no great reader," Shadamehr

said with a laugh. "I glanced at it. I read enough to know that I want nothing to do with these fiends—or the old wives who made them up, for that matter. Tell me again. Just the main points."

Alise sighed, this time loudly, so that he would hear. "Very well, my lord. The vrykyl are creatures of the Void. Perhaps they date back to ancient times. We do not know for certain. All we do know is that when Prince Dagnarus turned to evil and became Lord of the Void, he received a most powerful artifact of Void magic known as the Dagger of the Vrykyl. With this dagger, he killed a man and brought him back to life, granting him a horrible immortality. The vrykyl must continue to kill to maintain his life, feeding upon the souls of mortal beings. Lord Dagnarus created many vrykyl, who were constrained to serve him alone. Vrykyl wear magical armor that gives them strength and prowess in battle and immense power in Void magic."

"If the Lord of the Void had the ability to create beings of such power, I am surprised the world is not overrun with vrykyl," Shadamehr observed.

"Ah, but there is a catch," Alise replied, ignoring his bantering tone. "The man or woman who becomes a vrykyl must give free consent. He must be willing to choose death over life. And he dies with the knowledge that the magic may not work."

"All this happened two hundred years ago, you say, when Dagnarus was alive. And no reports of anyone seeing vrykyl since?"

"But there have been reports of mysterious deaths during those two hundred years, my lord," Alise said. "Entire families slain, their faces frozen in terror as if the last sight they saw was a horrible one. And every death the same—a single, small puncture wound to the heart. The mark of the soul-stealer dagger. Thus the vrykyl have remained alive, waiting—some believe—for their lord to return."

"Which, according to what we hear from the Dunkargans, he has. Well, well, this is all very interesting." He yawned widely. "Poor Brother Ulien. He was always a bit moonstruck. I think it must have whalloped him a good one this time."

The inn was dark. The landlord had gone to bed but had left them a candle to light their way to the not overly clean rooms.

"Good night, Alise," said Shadamehr, handing her the candle. "My room is next door to yours. You know the code. Knock three times if you need me."

He entered his room and shut the door.

Alise spread out her bedroll on the floor, not trusting the bed, which was already occupied by at least one cockroach, who came out to glare at the light.

She put her hand to the wall, tempted to knock three times. But she withdrew her hand, after a moment. She closed her eyes and resolutely tried to banish the touch of his sensual lips, the glittering blue eyes, and that ridiculous mustache.



A thunderous knock on her door woke Alise from a sound sleep. She could hear the sounds of crashing furniture and cries coming from the room next door. Roused and alert, she was on her feet, the words of a magical spell on her lips, when the door burst open and three armed guards entered her room. They were prepared to face an earth mage, for one immediately knocked the requisite spell component—a bit of earth—from her hand, while another clapped his hand over her mouth.

Once she was pinned, the guards removed the belt which contained her potions and vials of holy earth. They even had the temerity to pat their hands all over her body, searching for hidden objects, a task they enjoyed, by the leering grins. This done, they dragged her out into the hallway.

Shadamehr was neatly trussed and bleeding from a cut over one eyebrow. Two guards had tight hold of him. One of the guards was rubbing a swollen jaw and another nursing a cut lip. Looking past him, into his room, Alise saw another guard stretched out unconscious on the floor.

"Good morning, my dear," said Shadamehr. "Sorry about the early cock-crow. I told these banty-legged louts you wanted to sleep late but they wouldn't listen."

"I was having a bad dream anyway," Alise said. "What is all this about?"

Shadamehr shrugged and shook his head. There was no more time for talk. The two guards dragged them down the stairs, where the innkeeper stood pleading with a man in uniform, frantically disavowing all knowledge of them. A glance outside showed the sky just starting to grow pinkish gold with the dawn.

The uniformed man was tall and brawny, with the black curly hair and swarthy complexion of the people of Karnu. He wore trappings of a commander in the Karnuan military, and he carried at his side a most uncommon sword.

Alise looked intently at the weapon. The hilt and the scabbard were encrusted with rubies and jet, set in a fanciful design. Since she could not touch it with her hands, she stretched forth her other senses to try to touch the magic. The taint of Void was palpable. She almost gagged with the corrupt odor.

She shifted her gaze from the sword to its owner.

The dark eyes were flat and cold, small and mean. He had the sort of mouth that rarely smiled and then only at the sight of someone being hurt. But was he a vrykyl? Could she tell by sight? From what little she had read, she could not. Not unless he was wearing his magical black armor. For the vrykyl could take on the appearance of any mortal they chose, and their victims would never know until the soul-stealing blade pierced the heart.

The sword, though. That was definitely of the Void. When

Shadamehr looked at her with a question in his eyes, Alise nodded her answer.

"Take them to the prison," ordered the commander, the first words he had spoken.

"Excuse me, sir, but I wouldn't mind knowing why we are being arrested," Shadamehr said, his tone mild, as if this little misunderstanding could be easily rectified.

"You are under arrest for murder," said the commander.

"Murder?" Shadamehr was understandably confused. "We have murdered no one. We are newly arrived in town. We are friends of Brother Ulien. We were with him last night. You can ask him—"

Shadamehr's voice faltered and faded. For the first time in the months she had known him, Alise saw Shadamehr shaken.

The commander was eyeing him grimly. "So you admit it. You were with him last night. The last to be with him last night, it seems. He was found dead in his bed this morning. An empty vial—a vial that matches those vials"—he pointed to Alise's belt, now in the hands of a guard—"was by his bed. Proof enough that an earth mage was there."

"He did not die of what was in the vial, though, did he?" Alise asked.

The commander sneered. "You know well enough how he died, witch."

"Yes, I think I do. He died of a single, small stab wound to the heart," Alise said. "If you will look at the weapons we carry, you will find none that could have caused such a wound."

Shadamehr was silent, probably berating himself for having left his friend to die.

"Such a weapon is easily discarded," the commander replied scornfully. "And I have a witness."

"Of course you do," Shadamehr murmured.

The commander rested his hand on the hilt of his jeweled sword. "A dwarf. We found him with the body, so at first we figured he was the killer. But then he told us he saw you two leaving the house and heard you speaking of the murder you had just committed."

"And so we were," said Shadamehr. "My companion and I were shouting it to the rooftops. We wanted everyone in town to know that we had murdered a man. I take that back. In fact, we were singing. My companion has a lovely soprano voice and I—"

"Shut him up," the commander growled. "It doesn't much matter who killed the brother. Maybe you and the dwarf are in it together. We have him in jail, as well. I'll have the truth eventually. I enjoy questioning people."

Grinning, the commander made a jerking motion with his thumb. The guard holding Shadamehr gave him a clout on the head that reopened the wound over his eyebrow, started the blood flowing.

"And so, my lord," Alise said in an undertone, as the guards marched them off, "we have just been arrested for murder by the murderer. How are we going to get out of this one?"

"I got us out of the last one, my dear," Shadamehr said, grinning through a mask of blood. "Now it's your turn."



The prison cellblock was located beneath the military command post, a massive stone structure surrounded by high walls, containing a barracks, stables, a headquarters building and a parade grounds. Lit by torches that sputtered in iron sconces, the underground jail also housed the "interrogation rooms" replete with various instruments of torture and, next door, the morgue.

"How convenient," said Shadamehr.

The body of Brother Ulien lay on a stone slab inside the small, cold room. The corpse had not been attended yet. He was still wearing the brown robes in which he had died. There was little blood, Alise noted with professional interest. A wound such as the one Shadamehr had described—small, penetrating straight to the heart—might not bleed much. The skin of Ulien's face was grayish white, the lips and nails of the hands starting to turn blue. The eyes were open wide. The face was hideously twisted into an expression of extreme terror.

"Stop!" Shadamehr ordered, as he was being marched past the morgue.

Such was Shadamehr's presence that the guards halted at his command. He shook off the guards and stood looking intently at the body of his friend.

"I am sorry, Ulien," Shadamehr said quietly. "This is my fault. Forgive me. Very well, gentlemen," he added magnanimously, "you may proceed."

Realizing that they had just obeyed an order given to them by their prisoner, the guards looked guiltily to see whether the commander had noticed, then quickly seized hold of Shadamehr and hustled him off.

The cells were located along opposite sides of a long, dark, and narrow corridor. Large iron keys hung from hooks on the wall. The commander lifted a set of keys in passing and took down a torch to light their way.

"To the cell at the end of the hall," he ordered.

A peasant was in the corridor, cleaning the floor with a large broom, sweeping a pile of foul smelling straw out of one of the cells. The stench was horrible.

The other prison cells appeared to be empty. The prison was eerily quiet. The only sound Alise could hear was that of running water. She was wondering what this might be when the floor suddenly dropped out from under her.

Alise cried out in alarm. Off-balance, she wavered on the edge of a gaping chasm, terrified that she would fall. Her guards let her teeter one heart-stopping moment, then hauled her back to safety, laughing at her fear. Below her, a rushing stream ran black and turgid. A sewer, to judge by the smell. The peasant plodded past her, swept his load of muck into the hole. Tugging on a rope that hung from the ceiling, a rope

attached to what Alise now saw was a wooden door set in the floor, he pulled the door closed.

"There are grates at either end," the commander announced. "Just in case you were thinking that this might make a good escape route."

The guards pushed Alise forward. Her footsteps echoed hollowly as she walked across the wooden door. She passed the cell occupied by the dwarf, who was dark-eyed and dour, unkempt, disheveled, and dirty. He was shackled hand and foot, the manacles attached to the stone wall, and he glowered as they passed him. In response to Shadamehr's polite greeting in dwarven, the dwarf made a rude gesture with a manacled hand.

The guards hauled Alise and Shadamehr into the same cell, stood them against a wall, and clamped manacles over their wrists and ankles. The commander looked on with approval as the guards locked the manacles in place with the keys, which they then returned to the commander. He slammed shut the iron barred door of the cell and locked it.

"I demand—" Shadamehr began, but he was talking to himself. The commander had left, taking the torch with him.

The cell was pitch dark. Alise could not see Shadamehr at all, though he was chained only a few feet from her.

"Shadamehr?" she said softly, needing to hear his voice.

"Here," he replied. He was silent a moment, then said quietly, "Did you see Brother Ulien's face, Alise?"

"Yes, I saw." Alise decided it would be best to handle this dispassionately. Shadamehr would not appreciate maudlin sympathy. "His expression fits the description of a vrykyl's victims. Don't blame yourself, my lord. There is nothing you could have done. You yourself said that you could not fight a vrykyl."

"Especially not chained to a wall." His voice in the darkness was bitter. He shook his manacles in frustration.

"I've never known you defeated before," she said. Her hands were manacled to the wall attached by a short length of chain on either side of her head. She twisted her head experimentally to see whether she could reach her thick coil of hair. "I find it rather endearing."

"Yes, well, I hope you find it so when the vrykyl comes. What are you doing?" He could not see her, but he could hear her chains rattling in the darkness.

"You told me it was my turn to get us out of a situation," she said, her hands busy. "I have a vial of earth hidden in my braid. Do you have your lockpick?"

"I did bring you for your red hair, after all!" Shadamehr stated. "Yes, I have a lockpick, but I can't reach it."

"I believe I can remedy that."

Her searching fingers discovered the small vial she

habitually kept tucked into the thick coil of red hair for just such an emergency.

"Now, pray I don't drop it," she muttered.

"I'm praying," said Shadamehr fervently.

Alise forced herself to make each movement deliberate.

Moving slowly and carefully, she pried loose the stopper on the vial and shook a pinch of earth into her hand. She concentrated her thoughts on the stone wall to which she was chained, especially the portion of the wall to which the manacled were attached, and closed her eyes to better focus her thoughts.

"Stone, split!" she commanded and sifted the bit of earth through her fingers, letting it fall to the ground.

The sound of rock cracking was extraordinarily loud, or so it seemed to Alise, who cringed and looked apprehensively at the cell door, expecting that the commander would return at any moment. No one came.

*"There is
nothing you
could have
done. You
yourself
said that
you could
not fight a
vrykyl"*

Alise tugged on the chain and the heavy manacles pulled free and fell to the floor with a crash. She grit her teeth and continued her concentration on the spell. The fissures spread down the wall, and the manacles on her feet pulled out of the stonework.

Unable to lift her arms due to the weight of the iron manacles, barely able to move her feet, she dragged herself across the cell, groping along the broken wall to find her way. Finding Shadamehr, she clutched hold of him thankfully.

"What did you do?" he asked. "Knock the wall down?"

"In a way," she replied. "Don't talk to me. You'll break my concentration."

"Not talking," he said and shut his mouth.

Taking another pinch of earth, Alise repeated the spell. Again the loud cracking sound. Surely the commander must have heard that! Shadamehr dropped from the wall. He ripped open one of the seams of the leather jerkin he wore and removed the lockpick that had been sewn into the seam.

"I could use some light," he muttered beneath his breath, fumbling to try to find the keyhole in the darkness.

As if on command, light flared.

"Shadamehr!" Alise gasped. "We're on fire!"

The floor of the cellblock in front of the iron-barred door had burst into flame, a magical flame that consumed stone, apparently, for the fire had no other fuel. Not until the flames reached the dry straw that covered the floor on which they stood.

"Ah, that helps!" said Shadamehr. He thrust the lockpick into the keyhole of the manacle on her right hand.

"Hurry!" Alise urged, coughing in the acrid smoke.

"A dwarf Fire Mage, Ulien said," Shadamehr recalled, removing the other manacle from Alise's hands and starting on the manacles on her ankles. He cast a glance toward the cell where the dwarf was chained.

Alise covered her mouth with her hand to avoid breathing the superheated air.

The flames shot high into the air, forming a wall of fire between them and the cell door.

"I take that for yes." Shadamehr was working on the manacles on his ankles with one eye on the flames and the other on the keyhole. A click and he was free. He looked at the manacles on his wrists, eyed the fire, and shook his head. "We'll have to run for it. The flames are magical. Can we escape through that?"

"I don't see we have much choice!" Alise cried. "It's either that or burn to death where we are."

"Then here we go!" Shadamehr leapt into the fire.

Alise closed her eyes, covered her face with the sleeve of her robes, and plunged into the wall of flame.

She was through, gasping and slammed into the cell door. A few sparks clung to her robes, but she patted them out. Shadamehr had his arm thrust through the iron bars, turning the lock pick in the lock. An expert twist and the lock gave. The cell doors swung open.

"How are you?" he asked her, regarding her worriedly.

"A little weak," she replied. "The spell casting saps my energy. But I'll be all right. What about the commander?"

All was quiet in the cellblock. No sign that anyone had heard or seen anything.

"I don't know. I can't see anything for the smoke. I'll keep watch. You check on our neighbor the fire bug."

The flames in the cell had already started to die out. Perhaps that is what gave Alise the clue. She knew before she went to look for the dwarf what she would find.

He hung from the wall, head and hands and feet dangling limp and lifeless. She could not see the hole in his heart from here, but she had no doubt it was there.

She caught hold of Shadamehr. He had managed to free one of his wrists from the manacles and was working on the second.

"The dwarf's dead," she said, her voice catching in her throat. She coughed. "Blasted smoke! My guess is that he didn't set the fire."

"One suspect gone. How much earth do you have left? Enough for one more spell."

"Excellent."

"Shadamehr, compared to a vrykyl, my magical power is that of a child!"

"I wasn't thinking of taking on the vrykyl. I was thinking more about removing grates. Can you swim?" he asked, working on the lock and not having much luck. "This one's stuck!"

"Swim! Shadamehr," she protested. "You're not serious! You didn't see what it was like down in that sewer!"

"Call it a hunch, but I don't think they're going to let us walk out the front door—Look out!" Shadamehr grabbed Alise bodily, swung her behind him.

A figure loomed out of the smoky darkness. Rubies sparkled

blood red in the light of the dying flames.

Fire light flashed on a steel blade.

Shadamehr ducked. The blade hissed through the air just above his head, sending the smoke swirling. Alise tried to see the person—or the creature—wielding the blade. The smoke was too thick. Her eyes burned and stung. She fell back against the wall.

Shadamehr scrambled backward to avoid the return stroke. He had no room to maneuver. The ruby-hilted sword slashed again and this time drew blood. He cried out in pain and staggered backward, clutching at his upper arm. Alise caught hold of him, pulled him into a dark corner.

The smoke whirled and eddied around them. The commander lost them and was slashing blindly, coughing and peering through the smoke.

"Zounds!" Shadamehr gasped, leaning against her. "It feels like I've been stung by a thousand wasps!"

"That's the Void magic. It can work like poison. Can you stand?"

"Yes, but I don't know for how long. Here he comes again!"

Shadamehr's only weapon was the manacle, still attached to his wrist, and the short length of chain that dangled from it. He dashed forward, swinging the chain, trying to entangle the sword.

Alise took her last pinch of earth and flung it into the air. She focused her thoughts on the ruby-bejeweled sword and spoke a single word.

"Brittle!"

The commander evaded the swinging chain. He lunged at Shadamehr, who was too weak to dodge the stabbing blade. The sword struck Shadamehr in the breast. He shut his eyes involuntarily, expecting his death blow.

The blade snapped in two.

The commander stared at his sword in an astonishment that changed rapidly to rage. Flinging aside the useless weapon, he leapt to grapple with his prisoner.

Shadamehr swept his manacled arm and the flying chain caught the commander in the jaw, snapping his head to one side. He fell backward, landed on the stone floor, and lay still.

Neither Shadamehr nor Alise moved. Both held perfectly still, not even breathing, waiting for the vrykyl to rise again. The commander was out cold. He didn't so much as twitch.

Shadamehr sank back against the wall. "The old wives' tales were wrong. I've known pecwae to put up more of a fight."

Alise knelt gingerly beside the commander. She put her hand to his neck. "Shadamehr," she said, "this isn't a vrykyl. He has a pulse."

"What are you saying? He has to be the vrykyl! Brother Ulien—" Shadamehr sucked in a breath. "Brother Ulien! What a fool I've been! We have to get out of here!" he said in a low, urgent voice.

But they had only taken a few steps when a blast of wind as chill as death blasted through the corridor. The smoke

vanished, torn apart in shreds. The flames flared up behind them. The corpse of Brother Ulien strode purposefully down the corridor.

"He's the vrykyl!" Alise whispered.

The power of the Void magic crashed over her, an immense wave of soulless empty darkness which struck her an almost physical blow. Alise's hands went numb and limp. She dropped the vial of holy earth. Not that it would matter. Her own magical power was being sucked into the maw of the Void. Beside her, leaning against the stone wall, Shadamehr let his breath out in a long sigh.

"A trap," he said softly. "It was all a trap. You said my ego would be the death of me. I walked into it as blind as a mole in a snare."

"Indeed you did, Lord Shadamehr," said the vrykyl. The face was pale and gaunt in death, yet the lifeless mouth moved, the unseeing eyes saw. "My master has watched you long. He knows you are a threat. He heard you were searching for information about us. We had orders to answer all your questions, provided we could find you. Imagine my joy when I discovered, after feeding upon the soul of Brother Ulien, that he was once your friend. The rest was simple, after that. Now you will see me for what I am."

The illusion of Brother Ulien vanished. In its place stood a hideous knight in shining armor, black as the carapace of some huge, malevolent insect. His hands were covered with metal gloves adorned with sharp, hooked black talons. In his right hand he wielded a small poinard that glowed with an eerie, empty white light.

Terror gripped Alise. She felt her face starting to contort into that look of horror that would freeze upon it when she died. She could not think. She could not scream. She shrank closer to Shadamehr and felt him move. His left arm was creeping up the stone wall against which he leaned. She glanced above them and saw a length of rope, running across the ceiling.

Swiftly, Alise lowered her eyes, lest the vrykyl follow her gaze and guess Shadamehr's desperate plan.

"I wouldn't advise feeding on my soul," said Shadamehr, watching the vrykyl advance and hoping to keep his attention. Just a few more steps. A few more. "I'm likely to give you indigestion."

The vrykyl said no word. He walked toward them, his booted footfalls echoing loudly on the stone.

And then the footfalls struck wood.

Shadamehr grabbed hold of the rope and pulled hard. The wooden trapdoor flew open, booming against the side of the stone wall below it.

The vrykyl vanished, plunging down into the darkness. They heard his roar of anger and a splash as he hit the water.

"What do we now?" Alise cried.

"We run!" Shadamehr said grimly.

He caught hold of her hand and together they dashed down

the corridor, making wide detour around the hole in the floor. Neither took time to look for their enemy, who could be heard raging and thrashing about in the foaming water.

They ran up the stairs to the ground floor and out the front door of the military command post. They paid no heed to the startled guards, who yelled after them and began to give chase.

"Keep going!" Shadamehr panted.

Alise needed no urging. She could feel the pent-up rage and fury of the thwarted vrykyl rumbling beneath them like molten lava. The ground began to shake, and the guards halted in alarm. Alise glanced back and saw blinding white flame engulf the fortress. A concussive blast tore the fortress apart.

Alise dove under a large wagon standing in the roadway and covered her head with her arms. Shadamehr flung his body down beside her and put his arms around her. Rock rained around them, crashing off the wagon and bounding into the street.

And then it was over. The night was eerily quiet, for an instant, until screams and shouts and the sounds of people running toward the burning fortress shattered the stillness.

Shadamehr crawled out from under the wagon, turned to help Alise. "Are you all right?" he asked.

She nodded. She was bleeding from cuts on her hands and face where she'd slid along the ground, but otherwise she was unhurt.

"You?" she asked.

"Aside from being singed by magical fire and poisoned by the Void, I am fine," he said. "A lot finer than I thought I was going to be there for a moment."

"Do you suppose the vrykyl's dead?" Alise asked, shivering at the memory.

"No, I don't suppose it is," Shadamehr answered. "But it's going to take him a while to crawl out from the under the ruins of the fortress. In the meanwhile, I suggest that we take our leave. My questions have been answered. We now know the nature of the foe the people of Loerem must eventually face. And we know that neither of us has the power now to face it."

"But who does have the power, Shadamehr?" Alise asked, helping him to his feet. She looked back at the burning, blackened fortress. "Is there anyone who can fight them?"

"Not even the Dominion Lords are prepared to face this, Alise," Shadamehr said. "I don't know anyone who is."

He shook his head and put his arm around Alise, drawing her close. "But remind me to apologize to the first old wife I meet."

The tales of Shadamehr and Alise continue in Water from the Well of Darkness, the first in a three-book series by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman, to be published by Harper/Prism starting in Summer 2000. The stories take place in the world of the Sovereign Stone roleplaying game, designed by Don Perrin and Lester Smith.

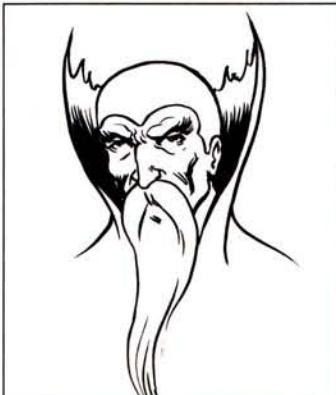
Dark Heroes

PC Portraits



by Scott Rosema

"The dark hero is always intriguing," writes Scott Rosema. "While it's comforting, to have clear-cut, obvious heroes, it's fascinating to see heroes that walk the fine edge between order and chaos." Scott adds. "Their past, their reasoning, is complex and twisted but they struggle for the good, often as a necessary penance for the darkness they've endured. They're always there to strike the blows when traditional heroes won't or can't."



Heroic Horror Campaigns

The key to a successful campaign is to balance horror, heroism, and humor.

by
Lester Smith

illustrated by
John Matson

HORROR ROLEPLAYING IS A STRANGE BEAST, CONFLICTED within itself—a genre with an identity crisis. On the one hand, the purpose of horror roleplaying is to alarm, chill, and disturb. By definition, horror must provoke a strong, fearful reaction. It must reach beyond fear, however, beyond even terror, to evoke an intensity of dread, aversion, or repugnance. Anything less than that isn't horror.

On the other hand, roleplaying tends to be heroic by nature. People role play to control a character rather than passively watch the action unfold. If a role-playing campaign is to endure, then its adventures must come to a satisfying conclusion—and at least some of the player characters should survive to enjoy it. In other words, even a horror roleplaying game must have its heroes.

On the third hand (yes, three hands—horrifying, isn't it), even the grimdest setting is susceptible to humor.

The very absurdity of the situation might leave players no recourse but to laugh. Some writers intentionally

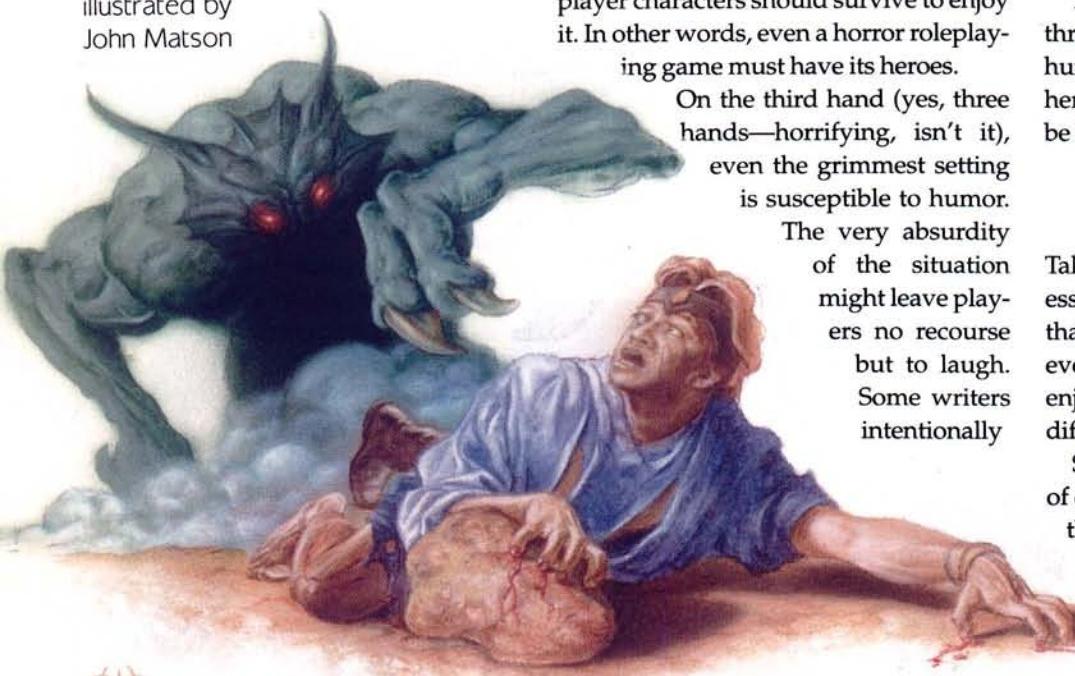
evoke laughter; others fall prey to it unintentionally. The old cliché that "It only hurts when I laugh" is perfectly reversed in horror. That is to say, we laugh because it hurts. We can only hope our laughter is a healthy release of tension, not the cackling of madness.

The trouble is that in many ways these three natures—horror, heroism, and humor—are at odds. How can we feel heroic when horrified? And how can we be horrified while laughing?

THE NATURE OF HORROR

Taken alone, horror is unpleasant. It is, in essence, all about revulsion. Because of that, not everyone likes horror. Some even think it's sick and that those who enjoy it must be sick too. Admittedly, it's difficult to argue with them at times.

Still, the genre is tenacious: Regardless of criticism, it endures. Fantasy might be the king—at least in roleplaying—and science fiction might be enjoying its heyday, but horror lurks ever in the background. Horror is insidious. Take a good, long look at your



fantasy campaign, and you'll probably find elements of horror prowling around in the shadows. As just one example, fantasy monsters find their origin in horror. The very word "monster" comes from the horror genre.

So why is horror so appealing? What makes us keep coming back for more? The answer might lie in our own origins. Horror had its start in the most primitive days of humankind. Its genesis is in the beast that lurked just beyond the firelight, waiting to drag away and devour the unwary. It isn't an accident that, even today, one of the most common themes of horror is that of being eaten alive. Despite our cultural and technological advances, something of that ancient terror still prowls at the back of our minds, and it's nice once in a while to trot it out and confront it in a horror tale.

Of course, the fear of being eaten isn't the only horrific element that a storyteller has at his disposal. You have a host of other emotions to play upon. Here are a few to consider.

Revulsion

Horror is usually disgusting, loathsome, and repulsive. This is one aspect that pushes it beyond mere fear. Meeting a thug with a knife in an alley might be frightening. Facing a maniac with a machine gun in a post office might even be terrifying. Being chased through a meatpacking plant by a man with a chainsaw and running by the grisly remains of his earlier victims begins to reach the territory of horror. Stabbing and shooting are bad, but messy dismemberment is gruesome—and thus more horrific.

Violation and Loss

Another important aspect of horror is the cruelly cavalier way in which it treats those things we hold precious. Human life is wasted, whether to feed the brutish beast or—worse—to satisfy an unnatural hunger. Further, people aren't just killed; they are tortured, mutilated, and savaged. They might even be returned from the dead as damned slaves of the creature that preyed upon them.

Beyond that, sacred things are profaned, precious things are desecrated,

and innocents are slaughtered. As often as not, even the heroes are scarred or maimed along the way. That's if they survive. Frequently, the heroes must sacrifice themselves to destroy the beast—all too often with no recognition by the rest of society.

That lovely thought brings us to another common aspect of horror—the element of loss. Often in horror, it isn't so much that things get fixed in the end as that the evil is finally brought to a halt. In a purely heroic adventure, an important item might be stolen, and the job of the heroes is to find and return it. That "item" might even be a person—a kidnapped child, for instance. In a horror adventure, however, precious things are more likely to be destroyed than simply taken. The child isn't kidnapped but cruelly murdered, and the monster threatens to kill more innocents before it is through. The job of the heroes is to put an end to its threat. Even then, however, there is no way to restore what was lost.

That element of loss might even touch the protagonists directly. The hero of a horror tale often suffers emotional, mental, or even physical scars. Hair turns white; constitutions are ruined; a character might have recurring nightmares or suffer bouts of madness. Sometimes, he or she might even lose a hand, an eye, or worse. The point is that from that day forward, such characters are marked with their loss. They carry upon their minds or bodies a perpetual reminder of the horror they once faced.

Vulnerability

Vulnerability is an extremely important part of any horror tale. There are many sources of vulnerability. Isolation is one, of course, but there are others. Often, heroes in horror films are outnumbered. Modern zombie films, for instance, typically have a few lone humans holed up somewhere against a horde of undead with a hankering for living brains. Further, horror-story heroes are often "outgunned." The monster they face is far stronger, faster, or tougher than a human, so much so that the heroes cannot face it directly. They must take care to avoid the monster until they can discover some weakness to exploit.

Worse, many horror monsters have a

Revulsion in Practice

Injuries in a horror adventure ought never to be simply a matter of lost hit points. Rather, the gamemaster should convey the wound in description first, then in terms of game mechanics (if necessary). Use your imagination to invent something appropriate to the moment. For minor damage, consider a description such as a simple "bloody cut just below the right eye" (and notice how even this innocuous wound adds tension by threatening blindness). More suitable for killing damage might be, "the troll knocks the warrior to the ground, stamps upon his chest, grasps his left arm and tears it loose, then munches on the bloody end." Not only do such descriptions make a battle seem more real to the players, they also give the heroes a more powerful motivation for destroying the monster.

Violation and Loss in Practice

If your players can handle having their characters lose something like an eye or a hand, consider the horror of "returning" it to them later. An animated hand is always creepy, but even more so to the character who once owned it.

By the same token, if you ever have to kill a player character in a horror game, use that event to best effect. Don't tell the character's player, for instance, but rather "draw the curtain" on the scene, and say that you'll get back to him or her in a moment. Leave the player guessing as to what happened, then have one of the other PCs find the body in a particularly shocking way. Both players will be horrified as a result.

propensity for preying upon the weak. It's no accident that Bram Stoker's Dracula prefers to feed upon young women. Besides the inherent sexual themes in the novel *Dracula*, it's pretty clear that Stoker, like other Victorians, assumed that men would put up a tougher fight. As further evidence, consider that his "Blooper Lady" preys upon children rather than men. (If you've never read

The Unknown in Practice

One mistake many gamemasters make is that they think they need to know all the secrets of a campaign setting from the very beginning. Unfortunately once they do know all the secrets, the sense of mystery is lost, and their game risks becoming mechanical.

Keep in mind that few authors plan everything before they begin to write. Most leave vast areas of their settings unplanned and aren't exactly sure of what their main characters will do over the course of the story. They set out in a particular direction without mapping

everything in detail, so their writing becomes a process of discovery.

There's something inspiring about "painting yourself into a corner" creatively. If you're uncertain about trying it, keep this trick in mind: Each time it seems that your story line is resolved, up the stakes. Once a particular villain has been thwarted, think of how his or her actions might fit into an even greater plot by an even greater villain. Perhaps the current villain was merely a dupe to distract the heroes while a worse plot was put motion.

Isolation in Practice

PCs are the perfect candidates for isolation—sometimes they're too perfect. Because these characters are distinguished from the rest of the fictional world as player characters, some players assume that they are at odds with every NPC they meet. Consequently, PCs might treat NPCs as disposable "spear carriers" or "red shirts." They might also be overly adversarial, drawing steel even when a simple chambermaid knocks to deliver linens to their room, because they view every NPC as a potential assassin.

If your players demonstrate either of these mindsets, it's high time to train them differently. Give their characters homes and families to care for; assign them young, sycophantic sidekicks to protect; or have their hirelings act so faithfully and nobly that those NPCs simply must be respected. It probably wouldn't hurt to hold a discussion with your players about how disrespect and adversarial attitudes toward NPCs deviate from the fiction that

spawned the hobby. If they want to enjoy the sorts of stories they read in books and see on the screen, they need to act more like the protagonists in those stories.

Once your players learn to value NPCs, then you can use secondary characters to best effect. Among other things, you can use them to make the heroes feel isolated. If the player characters are used to a welcome reception at wayside inns they visit, for instance, then it will be disconcerting for them to arrive at a new one and find themselves watched suspiciously or fearfully. Taking this idea further, if the townsfolk speak in whispers from time to time, obviously keeping a secret from the PCs, then the heroes will naturally worry. Alienation and paranoia take root in just this sort of soil. Of course, heroes who are used to warmth and camaraderie when they are around NPCs will also feel an even simpler sense of isolation when they are traveling far from signs of civilization.

acters in horror tales, what they don't know *can* hurt them! It *intends* to hurt them. And without understanding it, they have no means of defending themselves or fighting back.

The trouble is, horror often involves not merely the unknown but the ultimately unknowable. In other words, it reaches beyond the bounds of the natural and into the supernatural. Unfortu-

nately, horror authors and game masters face something of a quandary in this matter. On one hand, they can't rely upon the "unknowable" too often, lest it seem like a cop out. On the other hand, the moment that a threat is understood, it loses something of its horror and risks being considered mundane.

Isolation, Alienation, and Paranoia

Characters in horror stories are usually isolated from the rest of humanity, and they must face the monster alone. At its worst, this isolation is evidenced as a tendency for groups in horror movies to split up to search an area more quickly. The lesson that people in horror movies never seem to learn is that splitting up just makes them more vulnerable to being stalked and killed separately.

But isolation also plays a part in many powerfully horrifying tales. In the *Aliens* movies, for instance, the people who face the xenomorphs in each film are cut off from the bulk of humankind. They are trapped with monsters light-years away from any outside aid. Typically, by the end of each film, Ripley faces down the monsters alone, without the possibility of aid even from her own companions.

There are a couple of possible reasons why isolation is so common in horror tales. The first is that humans are social animals and are inherently frightened to find themselves separated from the pack. As a species, humans have survived against predators (even other humans) by banding together. It could even be argued that this is the definition of civilization. In any case, the fact remains that for most people, it isn't comfortable to be alone for long. Consider the fact that one of the worst punishments for prisoners has long been solitary confinement.

The second reason for isolation in horror is perhaps more philosophical. It is the thought that everyone ultimately faces death alone. A person might be surrounded by loved ones when the time comes, but when the final darkness descends, it's just the individual and the bony fellow with the sickle. By placing its heroes in isolation, a horror tale plays upon that essential truth and thereby toys with our nerves.

the novel, you're missing a treat.) This is another reason for the recurrence of the supernatural in horror—the very term means that the threat is beyond natural boundaries. How, then, is a mere human to combat such a thing?

The Unknown

Another extremely important element of horror is its awful mystery. For the char-

Isolation isn't always a matter of geographical distance. Sometimes it takes the form of alienation. An isolated individual might simply be disowned by the herd. This is especially true in older horror films, in which the hero is the lone scientist or lone genius teenager—a geek in either case—who knows about the monster, tries to defeat it, and is ostracized for his or her "crazy" beliefs. (OK, so the hero isn't always entirely alone. Sometimes the hero has a few geeky friends, maybe even a love interest, but often the hero's in danger of losing the love interest too, due to his or her kooky insistence that monsters are real.)

Of course, a person can be alone even in the midst of a crowd. The paranoid can't rely upon other people for help even when they're surrounded by friends. Thus, paranoia is certainly no stranger to horror tales. For a lesson in its horrific power, watch John Carpenter's *The Thing*. (Better yet, read John W. Campbell's *Who Goes There?* the novella from which the movie sprang.)

Moral Uncertainty

In horror tales, it isn't always easy to tell who's the monster and who's the victim. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* provides an early example of that moral uncertainty. Is the creature a monster merely because he is built from corpses? Or is Victor Frankenstein the true monster for conceiving of such a plan, then shunning the creature he built? Can the creature be forgiven for striking back at a creator who abandons him and a world that abhors him? Or is he equally guilty for repaying evil with evil?

THE NATURE OF HEROISM

The trouble with horror tales is that unless they are somehow resolved, they become nothing more than an exercise in futility. Few people want to invest much emotional energy into a story that leaves them feeling depressed at the end. That is perhaps even more true in roleplaying than in pure fiction. Usually, players in roleplaying games are seeking an escape from the grind of

—Moral Uncertainty in Practice—

Here's an excellent example from the audience at a recent seminar on the subject of horror. The PCs stumble upon a town under attack by a motorcycle gang. Not surprisingly, they join the defenders and end up routing the bikers, slaying many in the process. After the battle, the "heroes" learn that the townspeople are "pod people," and the bikers were trying to destroy this alien invasion. The PCs joined the wrong side of the fight.

their day-to-day existence. The last thing they want is to play a game in which their every move is thwarted and the abilities of their characters are dwarfed by those of their enemies. Players don't want to feel victimized; they want to feel heroic! But what does that mean?

Power

First and foremost, heroism in roleplaying requires a sense of power. It might be as extreme as the super powers of comic book heroes, or it might be one outstanding ability. In most roleplaying games, player characters are defined as those unusual people to whom adventures happen. Usually, the game mechanics are weighted to make them above average in their abilities, even at the start of play. As time goes by, their abilities continue to grow until the PCs become the stuff of legends. Even in games that keep their characters within more normal boundaries of human ability, the PCs usually become experts in their field of endeavor.

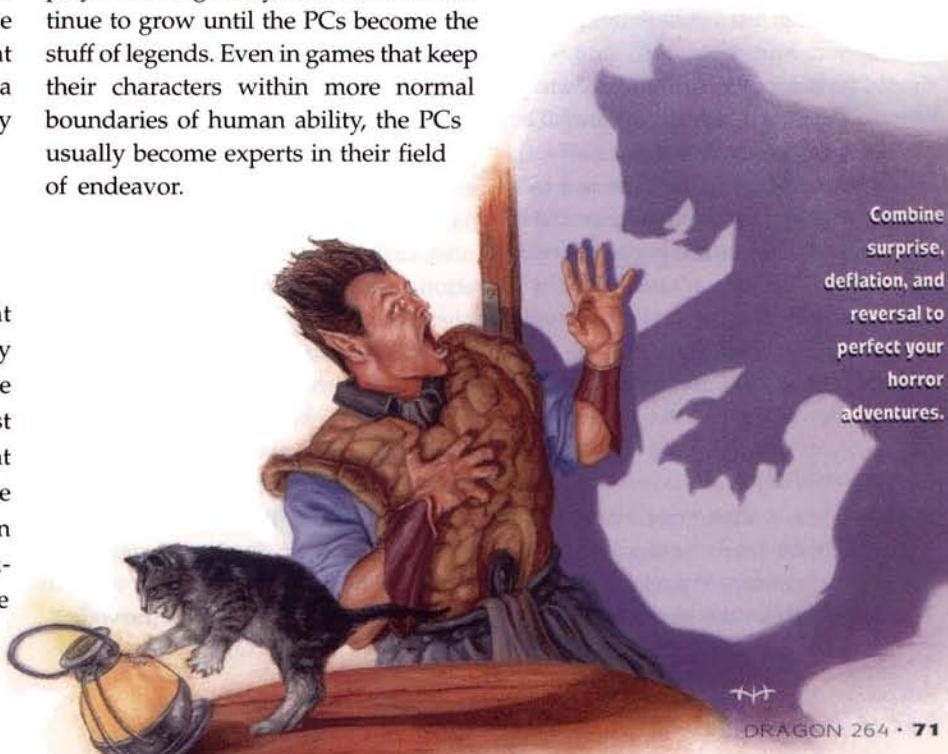
Accomplishment

A natural result of the heroes' power is accomplishment. Achievement is the true measure of ability. Sure, many players have fun just contemplating their characters' powers. You can hear them in game shops and at conventions, delightfully telling friends (and sometimes passersby) about their heroes' attributes, skills, and equipment—but even more so about the characters' adventures and the challenges they have encountered and overcome.

Again, given the normal constraints and frustrations of real life, roleplaying provides many of us with a chance to act the part of "movers and shakers" in a fictional setting. That's part of the joy of the hobby, and wise gamemasters make sure that their players get many chances to experience that sense of satisfaction.

Accolades

If accomplishment is the natural result of power, then the next part of that equation is accolades. Heroes are admired and rewarded. Their victories tend to be public, and they receive cheers for those achievements. Other people idolize them and seek to emulate their behavior, perhaps hoping someday to be like them. Recall the final scene of the first *Star Wars* film, for instance, in which Luke and Han are decorated for their valor. It is a fitting ending to an ultra



Combine surprise, deflation, and reversal to perfect your horror adventures.

Power, Accomplishment, and

Accolades in Practice

There isn't a lot more to be said about the role of these three things in a roleplaying session. A good gamemaster's primary purpose is to make sure the players have fun, and fun in roleplaying usually means winning in the end and enjoying the fruits of victory. So if you want your players to keep coming back for more of your adventures, make sure they're getting a healthy dose of "heroism" from time to time.

heroic tale. For a real-world example of similar recognition, consider the fame (and income) of modern sports figures—frequently called sports "heroes."

Wise gamemasters take care to reward their player characters with social acclaim, monetary rewards, elevation in rank, and other such trappings of recognition for their accomplishments. Such accolades reflect the good wishes of people in high places when evil has been thwarted and the heroes are responsible.

Clear-Cut Morality

One of the reasons that the "power + accomplishment = accolades" equation works in heroic adventures is that the heroes don't have much trouble separating good from evil. Good guys wear white hats, so to speak, and bad guys wear black ones. It's fairly easy most of the time to distinguish between who must be stopped and punished, and who should be helped. When a new hero is introduced to the tale, there might be some initial confusion (especially in comic books—largely so there is a reason for showing off the new character's super powers before the big battle with the villain), but it doesn't really last long in the scheme of things. Soon enough, everything is sorted out, and the new hero joins in on the fight against the bad guys.

Sense of Duty

Heroism means accountability. As Peter Parker (Spider-Man) professes, "With great power comes great responsibility." The very fact that the player characters

—Clear-Cut Morality in Practice—

Anyone who has spent much time as a gamemaster knows that the best adventure designs are pretty straightforward when it comes to who the villain is and what he or she is trying to accomplish. The simple truth is that players usually can't unravel complicated plots. They're putting too much energy into playing their characters to notice every clue and piece them all together, especially considering that the more complicated the plot, the longer it takes to play, and most groups get together only once a week or so. Even in a relatively simple plot, it might take the PCs some time to gather the clues about the threat they must face. Once those clues have been gathered, however, they shouldn't be too difficult to understand. Usually, if a gamemaster wants some uncertainty in the campaign, it's best just to introduce two different adventure plots at the same time and let the players sort out the initial clues of each and choose which one to pursue first.

are bigger than life (or at least better than average) makes them "guardians" of their society. What propels them to truly noble stature is that they usually have to make some sort of sacrifice in the exercise of their duties. Super heroes, for example, have secret identities to protect, and they don't have much free time for dating or family. Heroes often find themselves living "under a microscope," their privacy trampled under the feet of a horde of curious fans. But don't feel too sorry for them—it isn't all a matter of sacrifice. Remember that they are rewarded in one way or another for their efforts. And of course, "virtue is its own reward."

For gamemasters, the good news about this accountability is that when evil rears its head, heroic PCs feel obligated to become involved. Show them a threat to innocents, and they must do something about it. No need to worry about luring them in or tempting them with payment up front. If they want to be heroes, they have to "walk the walk."

THE NATURE OF HUMOR

Unfortunately, too much heroism and black-and-white morality can become boring. Taken to an extreme, heroism can become a parody of itself, full of posturing and vainglorious speeches too removed from the tangle of real-life situations to be taken seriously. That's when a little levity can help put things back into perspective. Humor also serves as a refreshing break from the oppressiveness of unrelenting horror. Like the periodic climbs on a roller coaster ride, it gives a momentary respite from the thrill and sets things up for the next big drop. The wise gamemaster knows that players are going to joke around anyway, so it is best to work it into the pacing of mood. Like horror and heroism, humor has its own elements.

Surprise

One of the most significant aspects of humor is the element of surprise. If you predict the punchline to a joke beforehand, it isn't funny. What makes us laugh is the shock of unexpected recognition at the end. It's funny because what seemed incongruous at first suddenly makes a twisted sort of sense.

In this way, humor bears some similarity to horror. The shocking revelation of truth behind the unknown lies at the heart of either a delighted laugh or a horrified scream. Consider this example: A man hears a noise from his living room in the middle of the night. Fearfully, he goes to investigate. Trembling, he bends to look behind the couch ... and his cat suddenly steps from the shadows there. He laughs in relief, picks up the cat, and turns around ... to find a demonic figure looming over him.

Deflation

The example above also demonstrates another important element of humor: deflation. Humor lets the air out of an overly stressful situation. In this example, the unexpected discovery of a mere cat where an unknown danger was feared suddenly deflates the scene's tension. That deflation is even literal: The man is certain to give a sigh of relief upon dis-

The Most Important Rule

The single most important thing for any horror role-playing gamemaster to keep in mind is this: Know your players. Horror, more than any other genre, is a matter of taste. What some people take in stride, others find offensive. What some are chilled by, others yawn at. So take some time to think about your players before you begin a session, and plan accordingly. Further, during the course of the session, watch your players' reactions and adjust the game accordingly. Depending upon their moods, sometimes you might have more humor and heroism, while at others you might be able to be grimmer than usual.

Keep in mind that the better the villain, the greater the sense of accomplishment when the heroes prevail.

That's one of the great things about horror roleplaying. You make an enemy so completely depraved that the players feel proud when their characters finally triumph. So give them a hard time along the way, and let the villain get in his or her licks before you finally let the tables turn and the heroes come out on top.

Be careful not to take this too far, however. If the heroes lose too much along the way, their victory might feel hollow. It's tough to feel heroic while sitting amid the ruins of all you once held dear. The trick is to make them lose just enough that they have a real emotional investment in besting the evil. Again, you'll have to judge your own players to determine just how much is enough.

covering the cat. For a moment, perspective is restored, and the world seems safe once again. Of course, that makes the horrific discovery that follows all the more terrifying.

Reversal

Another common aspect of humor is the shifting of expected situations. The lofty is brought low, the fearsome is made tame, and the expected becomes the unexpected. Such reversal is apparent in the example above when the tense moment is made safe and the safe moment then made deadly. Look up the word "humor," and you're likely to find it described with terms like "ludicrous" and "incongruous." In other words, humor involves perceiving something as disjointed, out of place, or reversed from its normal situation.

Madness

There is a certain insanity to laughter. From a biological standpoint, the very act of laughing is strange. Normally, animals bare their teeth only in threat, but not humans. We smile when we feel good. We pat our friends on the back and grin in their faces. When sufficiently amused, we bark out great guffaws of laughter. And, as pointed out before, we laugh most at things that make us uncomfortable, at things we fear. By laughing, we belittle them—a sort of reversal.

Human laughter is an aggressive act. In tales, villains laugh maniacally when their plans are proceeding well. They

laugh at the heroes they manage to hurt or mislead.

Laughter is well suited to horror. It can be used to diminish a fear or cut a horror down to size. Or it can be an indication of a mind pushed over the brink into madness. Either way, it can be an important element of any horror adventure.

COMBINING HORROR, HEROISM, AND HUMOR

Take a minute to review the elements of horror, heroism, and humor, and you'll note some apparent contradictions among them. Horror calls for vulnerability, while heroism requires a sense of power. Humor calls for a tongue-in-cheek attitude, while horror requires players to take their characters very seriously. Heroism calls for cut-and-dried morality, while humor pokes fun at such seemingly lofty ideals. So how, then, is a gamemaster to use all three of these elements in one campaign, let alone to good effect? The answer—as any comedian will attest—lies in the timing. Don't try to mix the three, but use each in turn.

For most adventures, it is best to begin with the seeds of horror. Start with just a hint of what the villain is capable of, and gradually reveal more until the heroes begin to realize just what an awful threat that villain is. Of course, intellectual knowledge is one thing, but experience is quite another. Just as your heroes think they have the measure of their enemy, it's time to dump them into the horror with such sensory overload that they

feel it to their very core. Do your best to make them hate the villain, and you'll have set the stage nicely for the climax.

Along the way, toss in some moments of levity to relieve some of the tension, or simply let the players do so naturally. During the early part of the adventure, that humor can be lighthearted. As the stakes are increased, you might want to switch to grimmer, "gallows" humor, to avoid undercutting the growing sense of horror.

Finally, when you've built the horror to a fever pitch, it's time to turn the heroes loose to wreak their vengeance on the villain. The more fully they have felt the horror, the greater their satisfaction will be at defeating it.

Canny planning, deft interweaving of horror and humor, and a keen eye for the appropriately dramatic moment are the hallmarks of a good horror gamemaster. Fortunately, experience is a great teacher of these skills.

So what are you waiting for? Go out there and put some fear into your players until they're jumping at shadows. They'll thank you for it in the end. 

Lester Smith is a monster. Beneath his affable exterior lurks a soul of extremes, one fascinated by morbid tales, the other prone to spontaneous laughter. He wounds his friends with ghastly medical anecdotes, then comforts them in their pain. For more about him, visit www.lester.smith.net.



You meet the most
interesting people
when you're dead,
especially in
the world of
PLANESCAPE®: Torment.

by
Val and Ray Vallese

Illustrated by
Scott M. Fischer

PLANESCAPE®: *Torment*



OU WAKE UP FLAT ON YOUR BACK ON A COLD STEEL slab, naked, your body stiff and sore. What seems like a starless sky above slowly becomes the black marble ceiling of the gloomy chamber in which you lay, and through the darkness you make out other slabs holding other bodies.

What is this place? How did you get here?

You try to rise but your muscles won't respond. Suddenly, the squeak of rusty wheels pierces the still air. A pale, portly woman in a gray robe looms out of the murk, pushing a cart cluttered with fluid-filled jars and sharp instruments. Through slitted eyes, you see her stop next to your slab and study your body, her heavy breath like sour fog against your skin. From the cart, she lifts a three-foot-long corkscrew, its metal spike stained black with blood, and you realize that you're about to be dissected ...

Luckily, you're not likely to find yourself in this situation—unless you're playing *Torment*, the new computer roleplaying game from Interplay's Black Isle Division, or reading the novel of the same name. The game follows in the footsteps of *Baldur's Gate*, the bestselling computer RPG based on the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, but *Torment* grows out of the majestic wonders and terrors of the PLANESCAPE campaign.

In *Torment*, the main character is an amnesiac who awakens in the Mortuary of Sigil, the City of Doors. But he has little

time to worry about who he is or how he got there—not when his first order of business is staying alive. Even if he escapes into Sigil, an alien city of strange creatures and portals that lead everywhere in the multiverse, he'll soon learn that what he doesn't know *can* hurt him.

In his dangerous quest for self-knowledge and survival, the hero encounters a variety of eccentric characters. Here are four such individuals from the *Torment* novel: Morte, a sharp-tongued skull with fighting skills and more zest for life than most living mortals; Ravel Puzzlewell, a cranky night hag whose bid for Sigil won her only exile to an endless maze of thorns; Pharod Wormhair, the self-styled king of underground scavengers; and Fall-From-Grace, a seductive woman who runs a vast library of memories. Though these characters are grounded in the PLANESCAPE setting, with minor changes they can enliven any campaign.

Before co-writing the Torment novel, Ray worked as an editor and designer for the PLANESCAPE game line, and Val worked as an editor of TSR novels and anthologies.

SKULL OF A 10TH-LEVEL HUMAN BARD

STRENGTH	10
DEXTERITY	14
CONSTITUTION	18
INTELLIGENCE	13
WISDOM	14
CHARISMA	15
AC	1
THAC0	12 (head-but)
HIT POINTS	8 (bite)
ALIGNMENT	101 (shatters at 0)
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Neutral good
	Head-but (2d4 dmg, knocks foe unconscious on attack roll of 19 or 20); bite (1d4 dmg); has no spells memorized but can read and cast 3/3/2/1 wizard spells that require no gestures or material components.
SPECIAL DEFENSES	Immune to mind-affecting spells, poison, gas, electricity, and temperature extremes; makes saving throws as a bone item, not as a bard; DN 95%; RL 80%.
MAGIC RESISTANCE	Nil
SIZE	T (roughly 1' diameter)

Weapon proficiencies: None.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Ancient History (12), Brewing (13), Direction Sense (15), Local History (16), Planar Direction Sense (11), Planar Survival (15), Reading Lips (11).

Appearance: Morte is the disembodied skull of a human male, able to float through the air at will (Movement Rate 12). His bony framework is yellowed and pitted. Despite being limited to opening and closing his lower jaw, Morte is quite expressive. He bounces in the air or zips around in circles when agitated, and he turns his "back" when angry.

Background: When he was an ordinary man, Morte split his time between the teeming metropolis of Sigil and the smaller but still bustling Outlands town of Tradegate. Both places offered what he needed to make a living: an endless stream of travelers whom he could relieve of their coins by posing as a wise seer. Since he had no real power to tell fortunes, Morte relied on his quick wits to subtly size up his client's true desires and then "predict" whatever they wanted to hear, weaving in just enough mystery and suspense to ensure that they'd become regular customers.

Morte lost everything, including his life, the day he tried to scam a victim who turned out to be a polymorphed yugoloth wise to his tricks. Morte was condemned to spend his afterlife as part of the Pillar of Skulls, an oracle on Baator made up of decomposing heads forced to answer any questions posed to them truthfully. A century or so of suffering compelled him to mend his ways, and this change of heart (so to speak) enabled him to tear free of the Pillar.



Ever since, he's been trying to make up for his past sins by offering help to those in need.

Equipment/Magical Items: Morte has no equipment or magical items of any kind—they'd need to be affixed to him in some way, and he doesn't like to be weighed down. In a pinch, he's willing to undergo temporary "adjustments" and let someone strap a *medallion of thought projection* to his forehead or cram a *gem of brightness* into one of his eye sockets.

Roleplaying Notes: Sarcastic and flirtatious, Morte is still a very human skull and misses the ways of the flesh. The sight of other people eating, drinking, scratching, dancing, sleeping, touching, and the like makes him jealous. At these vulnerable moments, Morte's likely to crack a joke by employing phrases involving missing body parts, such as "Let me give you a hand," or "I'd welcome her back with open arms."

In fact, though his desire to atone for his past through good deeds is strong, his main motivation for joining or aiding adventurers is that it makes him feel alive and vibrant again.

In return for companionship and excitement, Morte offers much. He's lived for centuries and has a vast knowledge of the land he inhabits. In a fight, he can bite with his powerful jaws or hurl himself forward like a sling stone, knocking a foe unconscious with a sharp crack to the head (or targeting other sensitive areas). He's also glad to exercise the skills of the bodiless, such as exploring areas where others can't climb or fit and keeping watch while his comrades must sleep or eat.

NIGHT HAG

STRENGTH	17
DEXTERITY	10
CONSTITUTION	16
INTELLIGENCE	15
WISDOM	9
CHARISMA	4
AC	0
THAC0	13
HIT POINTS	53
ALIGNMENT	Neutral evil
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Poisonous bite (2d6 dmg and save vs. poison or contract disease)
SPECIAL DEFENSES	Struck only by +3 or better weapons; immune to <i>charm</i> , <i>sleep</i> , <i>fear</i> , and fire- and cold-based attacks.
MAGIC RESISTANCE	65%
SIZE	M (5½' feet tall)

Weapon proficiencies: None.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Ancient Languages (15), Blacksmithing (17), Blind-fighting (n/a), Forgery (9), Spellcraft (13).

Spell-like Powers (usable once per round at will, unless otherwise noted): *know alignment*, *magic missile* (four missiles, 5/day), *polymorph self*, *ray of enfeeblement* (3/day), and *sleep*.

Appearance: Ravel Puzzlewell is even more hideous than most hags. Her dark-purple skin is dotted with scabs, warts, and hairy moles. Her body is stick-thin from near starvation, though her sagging pot belly refuses to deflate. A few long wisps of black hair hang from her spotted head, framing a pair of bloodshot eyes that glower beneath a single furry brow. Ravel usually stands hunched; when she moves, she skitters as if in pain. She wears a tattered dress of white, gummy cobwebs.

Background: Long ago, Ravel Puzzlewell made her lair in the Gray Waste, where she herded and sold larvae to fiends hungry for meals and slaves. She played the Blood War for profit, striking deals with both the baatezu and the tanar'ri as needed. Eventually, she convinced a baatezu regiment to help her take over Sigil. Ravel wanted to sacrifice the populace in a dark ritual, while the fiends wanted control of the city's portals. Once the battle for Sigil was underway, the baatezu betrayed the hag, hastening her defeat at the hands of the city's ruler, the Lady of Pain. As punishment, the Lady cast Ravel into an endless maze of thorns. The baatezu were ultimately driven from Sigil and, despite their betrayal of Ravel, blame the hag for their failure to take the city. The tanar'ri, too, seek revenge on Ravel for choosing to ally with the baatezu over them. Both races occasionally dispatch fiendish assassins into Ravel's maze to kill the hag. While she may be imprisoned, she's far from defenseless.



Equipment/Magical Items: In preparation for her attack on Sigil, Ravel swallowed a number of small magical items to ensure they'd stay with her. Now in her maze, she can regurgitate an item whenever she needs it, then ingest it again for safekeeping afterward. There's no telling what she might have in use at any particular time, but her prizes include a *ring of human influence*, a *cube of force*, and a *charm of blackness that cures diseases*. What's more, she's digested several items and their powers, so she can cast their effects from her fingertips at will.

Roleplaying Notes: Visitors to Ravel's maze find her a crotchety, complaining old woman who dislikes intruders. Though she still wields awesome power, she gripes about the various pains associated with her ripe old age. Her mind has deteriorated as well, leaving her confused and time-addled—she often mixes up the past, present, and future. For example, she can show a visitor the hidden portal that leads out of her maze and back to Sigil, but if asked why she doesn't use the gateway herself, she says it'll be a few more years before she discovers it.

Despite her quirks, Ravel can prove useful to an adventuring party. First, explorers must find a way into her maze (by locating a cleverly hidden portal in Sigil or by journeying deep into the Ethereal Plane, where all of the Lady's mazes exist). Then they must survive the maze itself. It's a floor of tightly interlaced roots and towering, shifting walls of razorgive sharp enough to slice a careless traveler to shreds, all under a liquid green skystream that rushes overhead. Ravel's likely to stalk the visitors until she's ready to reveal herself, at which point they might be able to draw on her vast knowledge of the baatezu, the tanar'ri, the Blood War, the Lower Planes in general, and numerous other dark subjects.

Pharod Wormhair

14TH-LEVEL HUMAN THIEF

STRENGTH	13
DEXTERITY	18
CONSTITUTION	10
INTELLIGENCE	9
WISDOM	15
CHARISMA	10
AC	2 (Dexterity, bracers)
THAC0	14 (13 with dagger)
HIT POINTS	70
ALIGNMENT	Lawful evil
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Poison, backstab ×5
MAGIC RESISTANCE	Nil
SIZE	M (5' tall)

Weapon proficiencies: Dagger, Knife, Hand Crossbow.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Appraising (11), Portal Feel (11), Rope Use (18), Tracking (10), Tumbling (18).

Thief Abilities: PP 95%, OL 75%, F/RT 75%, MS 95%, HS 95%, DN 75%, CW 70%, RL 70%.

Appearance: Pharod is a short, middle-aged man who always wears a long black coat with tattered tails, black boots, and black fingerless gloves. Long, tightly twisted braids of coarse red hair sprout from his head, fraying like old rope. A thick, wiry red beard grows over his wide mouth; he absent-mindedly unwinds long hairs from the beard as he paces. Pharod is a normal human, but to add to his reputation he poses as a tiefling—a plane-touched humanoid tainted by the blood of a fiendish ancestor. He smears berry paste over his skin to give it a splotchy crimson look, he files his teeth down to sharp points, and he rolls in ashes to exude an unsettling odor.

Background: Pharod is the self-proclaimed king of the collectors, a ragtag bunch of scavengers who prowl the alleys and catacombs of Sigil looking for corpses to loot or sell—and who sometimes boldly snatch bodies right out of the Mortuary. He once tried to make a living stealing from the dead, but he was canny enough to realize that the right person could unite the city's disparate collectors into a powerful, organized force. Pharod's band was small at first, but as word spread the collectors flocked to him like fleas, and now they reside in Ill-Wind Court, a city block that was long ago buried underground.

Under Pharod's watch, the collectors have tunneled out to many spots around Sigil. They give their king a cut of all profits, enabling him to remain in Ill-Wind Court at all times, attended by his guards, a pair of four-armed reaves (detailed in the *PLANESCAPE MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Appendix II*). Pharod claims that he stays underground because as a tiefling, he hates the light. In truth, his ego compels him to bask in the adulation of his subjects as much as possible.

Equipment/Magical Items: The vast storehouse of junk that is Ill-Wind Court allows Pharod access to any ordinary equipment, though it's not always in the best shape. Sewn into the



lining of his black coat are two *daggers of venom* filled with Type E poison, and he wears a *necklace of missiles*. Pharod wears *braces of defense* (AC 6) beneath his coat sleeves, preferring to keep them hidden so he can attribute their properties to his "natural" tiefling power. When necessary, he uses *dust of disappearance* to cloak himself and his possessions.

Roleplaying Notes: Pharod is a pompous blowhard who delights in exercising his authority over visitors to Ill-Wind Court. Adventurers might call on him when seeking a secret entrance to a particular set of catacombs, to gain information about the recently deceased, or to negotiate a price for Pharod's gang to locate or collect nearly anything or anyone. Pharod honors the exact wording of any deal struck, though the terms are likely to weigh in his favor.

The surest way to get on Pharod's good side is to bow and scrape before him; questions and challenges only earn his wrath. Though he might not wield great might, he does hold sway over a loose army of a hundred or more collectors, even though many of them care nothing for him and offer their obedience only to win the use of Ill-Wind Court's tunnels.

Anxious to claim his "heritage" as a tiefling, Pharod often drops the names of powerful fiends. It's hard to tell what's true and what's fiction. He capitalizes on his importance, never missing a chance to demean others or boss them around. He takes great pride in being a self-made leader and talks about himself in the third person, though his low-class and slang-choked dialect clearly mark him as a common street ruffian.

Fall-From-Grace

SUCCUBUS (LESSER TANAR'RI)

STRENGTH	8
DEXTERITY	12
CONSTITUTION	12
INTELLIGENCE	16
WISDOM	16
CHARISMA	18
AC	0
THAC0	15 (13 with <i>hornblade</i>)
HIT POINTS	43
ALIGNMENT	Lawful neutral
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Kiss drains one level of life energy
SPECIAL DEFENSES	Struck only by +2 or better weapons; immune to fire, electricity, and poison; half damage from cold and gas; never surprised; fly (only in succubus form).
MAGIC RESISTANCE	30%
SIZE	M (6' tall)

Weapon proficiencies: Scimitar.

Nonweapon proficiencies: Etiquette (18), Herbalism (14), Planar Sense—Baator (15), Planar Survival—Baator (14), Singing (18), Ventriloquism (14).

Spell-like Powers (usable once per round at will, unless otherwise noted): *charm person*, *clairaudience*, *darkness 15' radius*, *ESP*, *become ethereal*, *gate* (one babor once per day, 40% chance of success), *infravision*, *plane shift*, *shapechange*, *suggestion*, and *teleport without error*.

Appearance: Disdainful of her bloodline, Fall-From-Grace remains in humanoid form whenever possible. In this guise, she appears as an achingly beautiful, long-limbed young woman with flawless, milk-white skin. Strands of gold and copper run through her silky crimson hair, and her luminous, leaf-green eyes tilt slightly upward at the outside corners. Her delicate ears come to a fine point, and her rosebud lips are likely to curve into a smile. She likes to wear a laced corset of blue velvet and a pair of black leather pants, accenting her outfit with a green silk sash tied around her small waist. When seriously provoked or endangered, Grace reverts to her true form, in which her eyes burn red with fiendish fire and sharp wings spread out from her back.

Background: Fall-From-Grace is the daughter of Red Shroud, the succubus ruler of Broken Reach, a town on the first layer of the Abyss. The babor who sired Grace tried to use the child as a tool to insinuate himself into the town's power structure, but Red Shroud headed off that challenge by selling her daughter into slavery instead. The young succubus wound up in the hands of the baatezu, serving them for millennia until she won her freedom in a contest of improvisation with one of her cornugon masters. She made her way to Sigil and



joined the Society of Sensation, devoting herself to the exploration of things she could see, hear, smell, touch, and taste. As the head of one of the faction's sensoriums, where customers can sample memories recorded in magical stones, Grace oversees the accumulation of an endless variety of experiences and offers them to a public ever hungry for new sensations. Unlike other succubi, Grace has never known physical love and has no desire for it—a determination shaped by her scorn for those of her race.

Equipment/Magical Items: Fall-From-Grace carries a scimitar-sized *hornblade* +2, though she prefers to rely on her natural powers in combat. Her *ring of mind shielding* never leaves her finger, and she wears a pair of thin, green crystal *eyes of seeing* that function as the gem of the same name.

Roleplaying Notes: Grace has long since shed the malice and chaos that usually defines her kind. The time she spent with the baatezu made her see the benefits of an orderly existence, and her history with both races of fiends made her aware of the futility of evil. Indeed, she's friendly and welcoming to most visitors to her sensorium, eager to interview them to see if they might have unique experiences they'd be willing to record for others to relive. And she's just as pleased to provide her guests with specific memories already in her collection—say, what it's like to fight a slaadi, or the proper method of distilling a particular potion, or the calm of lolling in a meadow on the gentle plane of Elysium. On occasion, Grace even hires adventurers to obtain a specific memory or sensation that she'd like to have in her inventory.

MARVEL
Comics

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ ADVENTURE GAME



FAST-PLAY

WOLVERINE

VS. THE BROOD QUEEN

FOR ONE OR TWO PLAYERS

WHO WILL
WIN?

IT'S UP
TO YOU!

Redman
Williams
Selinker
Skroce
Dickey

B0001026

MARVEL
SUPER HEROES
ADVENTURE GAME

WOLVERINE [LOGAN]



HISTORY

Wolverine's origin is a mystery. Heather and James Hudson (Vindicator and Guardian, respectively) of Alpha Flight report that they found Logan in the Canadian woods, animalistic and incoherent. Someone had already laced his skeleton with unbreakable adamantium, and he had a set of retractable claws made of the same metal. After the Hudsons nursed Logan back to health, he worked for a while as an intelligence operative for the Canadian government. Rather than lead the first Alpha Flight team as "Weapon X," however, Logan joined the X-Men.

Much later, Magneto ripped all the adamantium from Wolverine's body, but Logan still retains a set of bone claws. Though he finds these much less effective than the adamantium ones, his improved healing factor is some compensation.

Now, for this adventure, YOU are Wolverine!

STRENGTH

♥ Hearts

8

AGILITY

♦ Diamonds

10

INTELLECT

♠ Spades

6

WILLPOWER

♣ Clubs

10

HAND SIZE

5

POWERS

Below are Wolverine's special powers, along with their poker deck trump suits and instructions on how to use them in the game.

Claws +2 (Hearts): If Wolverine hits an opponent with his claws, he inflicts 2 damage points over and above what he could do with a regular punch.

Enhanced Senses 16 (Clubs): Wolverine's incredibly acute senses allow him to attack first a majority of the time. If Wolverine is the target of an ambush, play a card from your hand and add its value to 16. Compare that number to the opposition score (the Brood Queen's Agility + her cardplay). If Wolverine's total is higher, the ambush fails. Determine who attacks first in the normal fashion.

Regeneration 15 (Hearts): Whenever Wolverine is hurt, he heals if the card drawn in #14 (the "Had enough yet?" step of the combat sequence) is odd. This means that Wolverine heals more often than does the Brood Queen.

RECENT EVENTS

A couple of weeks ago, word reached the X-Men that a team of naturalists had disappeared in the Indonesian Archipelago near Madripoor, Wolverine's occasional home. But it was not until one of them returned with wild stories about UFOs and "bug creatures" that Wolverine knew it was time to act. These "bugs" could be none other than Brood, the vicious aliens whose homeworld the X-Men had helped to destroy. Sure enough, the X-Men found a Brood Hive on a volcanic jungle island. Wolverine set out alone to exterminate the Brood Queen, while the rest of the X-Men dealt with the Hive's other inhabitants.

HEY BUB!
TEAR THIS SHEET
OFF BEFORE
YOU PLAY!

IN EVERY COMIC YOU'VE EVER READ, YOU'RE THE PASSENGER ALONG FOR THE RIDE.

EACH TWIST AND TURN IS EXACTLY THE SAME THE FIRST TIME AND THE LAST TIME YOU READ THE STORY.

NOW'S YOUR CHANCE TO STEP OUT OF THE PASSENGER SEAT AND SLIDE INTO THE DRIVER'S SEAT WITH YOUR FAVORITE HEROES!



Welcome to the Marvel Universe, true believer!

You're clutching a free sample of the *Marvel Super Heroes*™ Adventure Game. With it, you can experience mighty Marvel action personally in a fight between Wolverine and a Brood Queen. You get to play Wolverine against this alien menace. You can do it alone, or let one of your friends play the Brood Queen against you. Afterward, you can trade parts and fight again!

When you see how cool it is to be a super hero, we know you'll ache for more. So at the end of the booklet, we'll show you what you need to keep playing this incredible game.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

The *Marvel Super Heroes*™ Adventure Game comes with a spiffy deck of Fate Cards featuring a different hero or villain on every card. If you don't have a Fate Deck yet, you can play the fight in this book with a regular, 52-card poker deck. You might also want to keep a pencil and a piece of paper handy.

START PLAYING NOW!

Follow the numbered instructions in order, unless an entry says you should skip to another section. If you're playing with a friend, you can skip any *blue italic* text. If you're playing alone, use the *blue italic* text on any entry where it appears; if there is none (as in step #1), just use the regular text.

1 GET A DECK OF CARDS.

Ditch the jokers. Shuffle the deck. Put it where you (or you and your partner) can reach it.

2 GET YOUR CHARACTER SHEETS.

Remove the book cover and separate it at the fold. One person takes the Wolverine page, the other the Brood Queen page. Take a moment to look them over, but don't sweat the details yet.

If you want to play alone, detach Wolverine's hero sheet (the inside front cover) and look it over.

3 GET A HAND OF CARDS.

If you're playing Wolverine, draw five cards and don't show them to the person playing the Brood Queen.

If you're playing the Brood Queen, draw four cards and don't show them to the person playing Wolverine.

If you're playing alone, draw five cards for Wolverine. The Brood Queen doesn't get a hand of cards. Flip the top card of the deck. She'll use that card for everything she does this exchange.

4 ROYALTY IS WORTH 5.

All face cards (King, Queen, Jack) are worth 5. Aces are not face cards; they're each worth 1. Numbered cards (2–10) are worth the values printed on them.

5 WOLVERINE THROWS A PUNCH!

If you're playing Wolverine, lay a card from your hand face-up on the table. Add its value to Wolverine's Strength (8). Write down the total or remember it.

Put the face-up card beside the deck. This will be your discard pile. All cards that you or your partner play or discard for the rest of the game will go onto that stack. Draw a replacement card from the top of the deck and put it in your hand.

6 THE BROOD QUEEN DODGES!

If you're playing the Brood Queen, play a card from your hand. Add its value to her Agility (6) and write down or remember the total. Draw a replacement card for your hand.

If you're playing alone, the Brood Queen doesn't have a hand of cards. Use the card you turned up in #3 instead. Add its value to the Brood Queen's Agility (6), but don't discard that card yet. Be sure to remember her total!

RICH REDMAN

PENNY WILLIAMS

MIKE SELINKER

STEVE SHROCE AND CHRIS DICKEY

THE MARVEL BULLPEN

PAUL RANDLES & KEVIN MAPLES

SEAN GLENN

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7 DOES WOLVERINE HIT?

If Wolverine's total (from #5) is greater than the Queen's total (from #6), he hits her! He has claws, so add the +2 Claws bonus noted on his hero sheet to his total score (from #5). Write down or remember his new total and go to #8.

If his total score is less than or equal to the Brood Queen's score, he misses. Go to #10.

8 GETTING PAST THE BROOD QUEEN'S ARMOR.

The stronger you are, the tougher you are. So if Wolverine's score (from #7) is less than or equal to 14 (the Queen's Strength plus Body Armor), he doesn't hurt her. Go to #10.

If Wolverine's total score (from #7) is greater than 14 (the Brood Queen's Strength plus her Body Armor), he managed to hurt her. Subtract 14 (the Brood Queen's Strength plus her Body Armor) from Wolverine's total score (from #7). Whatever is left is the amount of damage he inflicts on her. Go to #9.

9 TAKING YOUR LUMPS!

If your character suffers damage, you must discard cards at least equal in value to that damage. If Wolverine hurts the Brood Queen, her player discards cards, and vice versa.

If at any time you have no cards in your hand, your character is unconscious and your opponent has won.

If you're playing alone and Wolverine has inflicted damage on the Brood Queen, subtract the damage (from #8) from her Health (25). If her Health ever reaches zero, she's unconscious, and you've won!

If you're playing alone and the Queen inflicts damage on Wolverine, discard cards from your hand at least equal in value to the damage he has suffered.

10 THE BROOD QUEEN STRIKES BACK!

If you're playing the Brood Queen, play a card from your hand. Add its value to her Strength (12). Write down that total, or just remember it. Draw a replacement card for your hand from the top of the deck.

If you're playing alone, use that card you turned face-up in #3. Add its value to the Brood Queen's Strength (12). Write down or remember that total.

11 WOLVERINE DODGES!

If you're playing Wolverine, play a card from your hand. Add its value to his Agility (10). Jot down the total or remember it. Draw a new card from the deck and put it in your hand.

12 DOES THE BROOD QUEEN HIT?

If the Queen's score (from #10) is greater than Wolverine's score (from #11), she hits him! She has claws too, so add +2 (the Claws bonus from her character sheet) to her total (from #10). Write down or remember the new total and go to #13.

If her total score (from #10) is less than or equal to Wolverine's total score (from #11), she misses. Go to #14.

13 THOSE CLAWS HURT!

If she hits, the Brood Queen may inflict some damage. Subtract Wolverine's Strength (8) from her total score (from #12). Whatever is left is the amount of damage she inflicts on him. (If this is zero or less, her hit inflicts no damage.)

See #9 for how Wolverine suffers damage, then go to #14.

14 HAD ENOUGH YET?

When each combatant has had a chance to act, the exchange ends. One of you flips the top card of the deck.

On a red card or any face card, Wolverine heals. If you're his player and you hold less than five cards, draw one card from the deck into your hand. If you already have a full hand of cards (five), don't draw any more. In either case, Wolverine attacks first next exchange. Go to #15.

On a black card from Ace-10, the Brood Queen heals. If you're her player and you have less than four cards, draw one card from the deck into your hand. If you have a full hand of cards (four), don't draw any more. In either case, the Brood Queen attacks first next exchange. Go to #15.

If you're playing alone, flip the top card of the deck. If it's red or a face card, Wolverine heals. If you have less than five cards, draw one from the deck and put it in your hand. If you already have a full hand of cards (five), don't draw any more. Either way, Wolverine attacks first next exchange. Go to #15.

If the card you flipped is a black Ace-10, add its value to the Queen's Health, up to her maximum Health rating (25). Also, she attacks first in the next exchange and uses this card for her actions. Go to #15.

15 KEEP GOING!

That's all there is to playing a combat exchange. But it's not all there is to the game—the battle continues!

If you're playing alone and step #14 says Wolverine should go first, return to #5 and go through the steps in order again. If the Brood Queen attacks first, go through steps #10—#13, then #5—#9, then back to #14. Continue fighting until one combatant is unconscious.

If you're playing with a friend, you have more options. If you want Wolverine and the Queen to punch each other in the face, don't read any of the rest of this. If step #14 says Wolverine attacks first next exchange, just go back to #5 and repeat the steps in order. If the Queen attacks first, go through steps #10—#13, then #5—#9, then back to #14. Repeat that process until one of them is unconscious.

But that wouldn't be a Marvel fight! The next pages let you juice up your game. If you want to use those, read them now, then go back to step #5 or #10 (depending on who goes first next exchange) and continue fighting.

WINNING

When your opponent is unconscious (see #9), you win!

NEVER FORGET!

No matter what options you use, remember four things during each exchange:

- 1) Whenever you play a card, you draw another from the top of the deck to replace it. You don't replace cards you lose because of damage until your character heals, though, and then only one card per healing opportunity.
- 2) Always subtract Strength and Body Armor from damage your foe inflicts on your character before you discard any cards.
- 3) An exchange lasts until everyone involved has performed one action. After everyone's actions, go to #14.
- 4) If you ever run out of cards, just shuffle all the cards in your discard pile into a new deck and keep going.

LIVENING UP THE GAME

All sorts of interesting things can happen in a Marvel fight! So if you want more than a slugfest, read over the next sections, then return to #15 and continue the fight under new conditions!

THE ARENA

You know from the character sheets that Wolverine and the Brood Queen are on a volcanic jungle island in the Indonesian Archipelago, not far from Madripoor. Their fight occurs in the lava tubes the Queen's drones have built into a Brood nest. Steam vents and sharp lumps of volcanic rock riddle the lair. It's dark, and the air is like a sauna even in the dead of night.

WHERE ARE THE X-MEN?

The rest of the X-Men are fighting a contingent of Brood Warriors, keeping them busy while Wolverine pursues the Queen.

USING YOUR HEAD

Marvel heroes do more than just duke it out with villains. Here are a few ways that you can try to outsmart your opponent during combat.

ESCAPES

Either side might want to get away from the other. Wolverine might want to lure the Brood Queen into an ambush. The Brood Queen might want a Brood Warrior to fight for her. Each wants to vanquish the other, though, so neither runs away for long.

If you want to escape, that's your action for that exchange. (Neither Wolverine nor the Brood Queen can hit an opponent AND run away in the same exchange.) So play a card and add it to your hero's Agility. Your opponent does the same thing. Whoever gets the higher total gets to decide whether the distance between Wolverine and the Brood Queen increases or decreases.

If the distance increases twice in a row (that is, for two consecutive exchanges), whoever ran away can choose to set up an *ambush* (see "Ambushes").

AMBUSHES

If your character lays an ambush successfully, he or she attacks first in that exchange, regardless of what the draw in #14 indicates. Hiding and moving quietly are Agility actions, so if you're laying the ambush, play a card and add its value to your character's Agility. Remember that total!

If you're playing the Brood Queen and want to try to detect Wolverine's ambush, play a card and add it to her Willpower (7). If you're playing Wolverine and want to detect the Queen's ambush, play a card and add it to his Enhanced Senses (16). Compare that total to your opponent's total for hiding (from above). If yours is greater, you detect the ambush and it isn't successful.



FEELING LUCKY, BUB?

You can use trump to improve your chances of success in any action. Playing in trump means to play a card of the same suit as the ability or power your character uses. You'll find the suits for your character's abilities and powers listed near them on their character sheets. For example, if Wolverine tries to punch or claw the Brood Queen, he's using Strength. That's Hearts, so if you play a Heart for his action, you're playing in trump.

When you play a trump card, don't stop there—turn over the top card of the deck. If that is also in trump, flip the next card too. Keep doing that until you turn a card that's not in trump. Then add the values of all the cards (the one you first played plus all those you turned over) to the ability or power rating, and that's your total for the action.

Face cards (King, Queen, Jack) are *never* trump.

If the ambush succeeds, whoever set it can attack first. If it doesn't succeed, decide who goes first normally. (That is, look at the card flipped in step #14 of the last exchange and follow the instructions there.)

BROOD WARRIORS

The Queen has a limited supply of Brood Warriors. Since the nest isn't complete, she hasn't yet hatched enough Warriors to defeat the X-Men. If you're her player and you feel she's suffered too much damage by step #14 of the combat sequence, you can have her call a Warrior away from the X-Men to get Wolverine off her back—if she also tries to escape in the same exchange.

If the Brood Queen brings in a Warrior (see the Queen's sheet for his abilities), Wolverine must choose what to do. He can chase the Queen, escape from the Warrior, or make a stand against the Warrior. If he chases the Brood Queen, the Warrior pounds away at him. Wolverine can't attack back as long as he's chasing the Queen, but she can't set up an ambush for him unless she can increase the distance between them twice (see "Escapes"). If Wolverine fights the Brood Warrior, the Brood Queen can automatically escape and set up her ambush for him (see "Ambushes"). If Wolverine escapes the Warrior, the Brood Queen gets away and can set up an ambush, but the Warrior can't attack Wolverine any more.

The Brood Warrior doesn't get a hand of cards. When he attacks (on the Brood Queen's turn), add whatever card you flipped over in #14 to the ability or power he's using. When he suffers damage, you subtract it from his Health (17). When he reaches zero Health, he's unconscious. The Brood Warrior does get to heal whenever the draw in #14 is a black Ace—10, however, as does the Brood Queen—even if she's not there.

STEAM VENTS

This volcanic island is a maze of steam vents and old lava tubes. The Brood Queen knows her tunnels, and she knows where the steam vents are. Wolverine's Enhanced Senses lead him straight to the nearest vent. You can move toward one during the fight just by saying you want to do so—you don't have to play cards.

To throw someone into a steam vent takes two exchanges. In the first exchange, you attack normally but don't inflict damage. If you beat your foe's dodge attempt, you've grabbed hold. Your opponent can still hit you AND make a Strength action to break free at the end of the exchange (right before #14). To make a Strength action, your opponent plays a card and adds it to his or her character's Strength. If that's higher than the total you used for the grab, your opponent breaks free. If your held opponent doesn't break free, you go first on the next



exchange and can try to throw your foe into the steam vent. This is a normal attack using Strength, and the opponent may make a normal dodge. If the dodge succeeds, the victim twists nimbly aside and is ready to fight. If the dodge fails, the steam inflicts 20 damage points (no card values added). Your thrown foe subtracts Strength and armor normally from that damage.

BIG ROCKS

Ripping up a big rock takes the place of an attack. You don't need to play cards to have your character pick up the rock, but doing this does require the character to stand still.

On the next exchange, your character can use the rock as a club or as a missile. As a club, the character can use it over and over again. Handle the attack normally (using Strength as the action ability), and the opponent can dodge normally. If your character hits, add 6 points (instead of the 2 you've been adding for claws) to your action total for damage.

If your character wants to throw the rock, use Agility instead of Strength to attack. If the attack hits, add 6 points to the damage. You can hit an opponent even if there's distance between you, but you can throw the rock only once. To do that again, you need a new rock.

PARALYSIS AND THE BROOD QUEEN

If the Queen has high Spade cards, she should attack using her Paralysis power (see her sheet). If she paralyzes Wolverine, she takes him to a hatching chamber, manacles him to a wall, and implants a Brood egg. Then she leaves him in agony.

See the Brood Queen's sheet ("Paralysis") to determine how long it takes for Wolverine's Paralysis to wear off. After that, he can try to break free. To break the manacles, Wolverine must use his Strength—but as long as an egg is in his body, Wolverine is in horrible pain and his Strength score is half its normal value. If you're Wolverine's player, play a card and add it to his current Strength (4). If the total is 12 or greater, he breaks free.

Wolverine can make one attempt to break the manacles each exchange after Paralysis wears off. If he ever heals completely, assume his mutant healing powers have defeated the implanted egg. If he is not yet free of the manacles, he can then use his full Strength (rather than half) in the attempt.

Once Wolverine is free, he can hunt down the Brood Queen again. Regardless, you can always assume the X-Men defeat the Brood Warriors and rescue Wolverine. Don't feel that you have to sit around doing nothing but healing and flipping cards if you'd rather be brawling *Marvel* style!

WANT MORE?

If you want to play again, shuffle all the cards back into the deck and go back to #1.

THE BROOD QUEEN



HISTORY

The Brood are insectoid aliens from a distant part of our galaxy. They quickly became the fiercest competitors for the resources of their own world, then branched out into space. Brood queens developed the ability to reproduce by implanting their eggs in other creatures. These unwilling hosts then became Brood when the eggs hatched. When Brood expansion threatened Shi'ar space, the X-Men and the Starjammers destroyed the Brood homeworld. But some Brood survived, and the X-Men have repeatedly battled against rogue queens and their hives of Broodlings. Now, another queen has set her sights on Earth.

POWERS

Body Armor +2 (Hearts): Body Armor adds 2 points to the damage the Brood Queen can absorb.

Claws +2 (Hearts): If the Queen hits Wolverine with her claws, she inflicts 2 extra damage points over and above what she would do otherwise.

Paralysis 12 (Spades): To use this power, play a card and add its value to the Queen's Paralysis score (12). Wolverine's player must then play a card and add it to his Willpower (10). Compare the two totals; if the Brood Queen's is higher, Wolverine's player must subtract his Strength score (8) from her total and discard cards equal to or above the remainder as if that were damage—except that the discarded cards go face-up in front of Wolverine's player. If at any time Wolverine's player has an empty hand while there are cards on the table for Paralysis, Wolverine is paralyzed and cannot take any action until the Paralysis ends. Whenever Wolverine heals, his player turns one of those cards face-down. When they're all face-down, they go back into the player's hand and Wolverine can move again.

RECENT EVENTS

This Brood Queen arrived on Earth with just a few Warriors. She chose a jungle island for her new Hive because of its rich wildlife and its relative isolation. Over the last few months, she has been implanting her eggs in the local creatures her Warriors have captured. The new Workers hatched from these eggs have managed to build an extensive tunnel system for the Hive.

When a group of naturalists came to the island a few weeks ago, the Queen debated whether to have her Warriors capture them for implantation. On the one hand, any Brood hatched from them would have their skills and knowledge; on the other, if any of them escaped to tell their story, it could jeopardize the whole Brood colony. It was a risk worth taking, but it proved foolhardy, for one did escape. Now the Hive is under attack, and one cursed human has gotten through the Warriors to attack the Queen in her chambers!

BROOD WARRIOR

Strength (Hearts) 9, Agility (Diamonds) 8, Intellect (Spades) 3, Willpower (Clubs) 3, Health 17. Body Armor +5 (Hearts). Body Armor adds 5 points to the damage the Brood Warrior can absorb. For example, if Wolverine inflicted 20 damage points on a Brood Warrior, you would subtract 8 plus 5 (or 13) from that, leaving 7 damage points to subtract from the Warrior's 17 Health.

STRENGTH

Hearts ♥

12

AGILITY

Diamonds ♦

6

INTELLECT

Spades ♠

9

WILLPOWER

Clubs ♣

7

HAND SIZE (HEALTH)

4 [25]

HEY BUB!

TEAR THIS
SHEET OFF IF
YOU'RE PLAYING
TOGETHER!

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THAT MISSES OUT ON THE
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DRAGON

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contest

“Ghost Story” Contest Rules

1. Entry To enter, send your completed entry form including your name, address, phone number, the contest to which your submission applies, and your new creature (“Entry”) to TSR, Inc. (“TSR”) DRAGON Magazine “Ghost Story” Contest, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707. No purchase required. You may submit as many Entries as you wish, but only one Entry per submission. There is no advantage to submitting the same entry more than once. Entries should not exceed 750 words. If you are under 18, you must have your parent's permission to enter. Entries must be received before midnight (Pacific Time), December 3, 1999. Winners will be selected by a team of TSR judges based on the Entry's design, originality, and appropriateness. All decisions are final. The probability of winning is based exclusively on the quality of the Entries received.

2. Originality of Entry: Entries must be in English. Entrant warrants that the Entry above is the original and exclusive work of Entrant, and that Entrant has not assigned, transferred, licensed, or sold the right to use the Entry to any other party. Entrant agrees to indemnify TSR against good faith claims of copyright infringement based on TSR's use of the Entry, but such indemnification shall not apply if it can be shown that Entrant had no access to the allegedly infringed work.

3. Use and Ownership of Entry Info: In consideration for TSR's review of Entrant's application and, if applicable, prizes awarded hereunder, Entrant transfers all rights, including all copyright ownership rights in Entry to TSR and acknowledges that the Entry is hereby the sole property of TSR. It is further understood that Entrant hereby transfers any and all interest or rights that she/he acquires in Entry, including but not limited to trademark rights and copyrights and protection under 17 U.S.C. § 106 to TSR. TSR shall have no obligation for consideration other than as defined herein.

4. Prizes: The two winning Entrants of the “Ghost Story” Contest shall each receive a \$100 prize package consisting of new TSR roleplaying game products.

5. Eligibility: Void where prohibited by law. In order to receive any prize, Entrant agrees to sign TSR's affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance (“Affidavit”) within 5 days of receipt of notification or forfeit prize. If the winner is a minor, then the guardian must co-sign the Affidavit. By acceptance of prize, Entrant agrees to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. TSR assumes no responsibility for late, ineligible, incomplete, or misdirected Entries. Non-compliance with the time parameters contained herein or return of any prize/prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification, and an alternate winner will be selected. Employees of TSR, Wizards of the Coast, Inc., and their respective affiliates and distributors are not eligible.

6. Restrictions: Void where prohibited or restricted by law. All prize winners shall be notified by phone or letter. No substitutions of prizes are allowed, except at the option of TSR, should the featured prize(s) become unavailable. All federal, state, provincial, and local regulations apply. The winner is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state, provincial, and local taxes. For a list of winners, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to DRAGON Magazine “Ghost Story” Contest Winners, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 707, Renton WA 98057-0707. Requests for winners lists must be received by December 22, 1999. Allow 4 weeks for delivery of winners list.

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That house on the end of Brightlamp Road, the one with the gables and wrought-iron fence, belongs to a quiet scrivener named Rupert Sacks. Before leaving town to pursue a happier fate, an apprentice remarked that Mr. Sacks had begun penning scrolls in his own blood. Days later, one of Mr. Sacks' regular employers found Rupert slumped in his study, a bloodless husk. From the adjacent library he heard the soft scratching of quill against paper, and without the aid of his cane, the man fled the house, white as a new spun sheet ...

Adventurers appreciate a good ghost story, especially when there is some truth to the tale or some reward to be reaped. In the AD&D and ALTERNITY games, ghost stories serve as excellent adventure hooks. Heroes endeavoring to explore a tale's veracity might find themselves at odds with conniving hucksters or genuine, supernatural terrors!

To Enter

Submit your own ghost story, and include 3-5 short adventure hooks telling DMs or Gamenmasters how they might incorporate your ghost story into their ongoing AD&D or ALTERNITY campaigns! Each entry is limited to 750 words, which includes both the ghost story and the 3-5 short adventure hooks.

Subject matter is not limited to ghosts; any horrific creature, location, or event is applicable. Entries will be judged on design, originality, and game compatibility. All entries must be received by December 3, 1999.

The Prizes

Two winning entries will be selected. Each winner will receive a \$100 prize package of new TSR roleplaying game products!

“Ghost Story” Contest

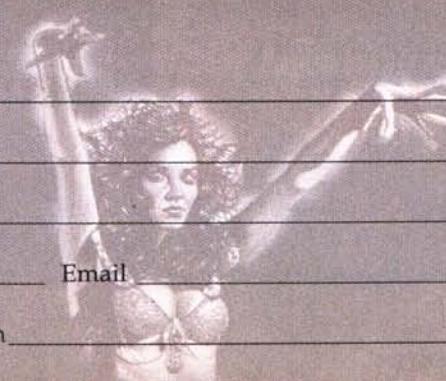
Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____



Convention Calendar



October

Archon 23

October 1-3

Gateway Convention Center,
Collinsville, IL.

Contact: Archon23, P.O. Box 8387,
St. Louis, MO 63132-8387.

Website: www.stlf.org/archon/23/
Email: archon@stlf.org

First Contact 6

October 8-10

Best Western Midway, Milwaukee, WI.

Website: members.aol.com/arimmr/
page/index.htm

Email: knightp@execpc.com

TennCon

October 15-17

Knoxville Convention &
Exhibition Center, Knoxville, TN.
Contact: Gameboard, 3501 Workman Dr.,
Suite D, Knoxville, TN 37921.

Email: gdi@ix.net

Knight Games

October 22-24

Berkeley-Carroll School, Brooklyn, NY.
Contact: Knight Games, P.O. Box 3041,
Brooklyn, NY 11201-3041.
Email: knightgames@aol.com

Con*Stellation XVIII: Lupus

October 29-31

Airport Sheraton, Huntsville, AL.
Email: constell@traveller.com

Charmin Person or Mammal
MIND BLAST Solution:

IL

WI

TN

AL

November

Carnage on the Mountain

November 5-7

Ascutney Mountain Resort,
Ascutney, VT.

Contact: Carnage on the Mountain,
64 County Road-Hartland,
Windsor, VT 05089.

Website: members.aol.com/carnagecon/index.htm
Email: carnagecon@aol.com

Pentacon 15

November 13-15

Grand Wayne Convention Center,
Fort Wayne, IN.

Contact: Pentacon, P.O. Box 10427,
Fort Wayne, IN 46856.

Website: www2.fwi.com/~dht/pentacon
Email: dht@fwi.com

VT

IN

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted.

Warning: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," DRAGON Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A.

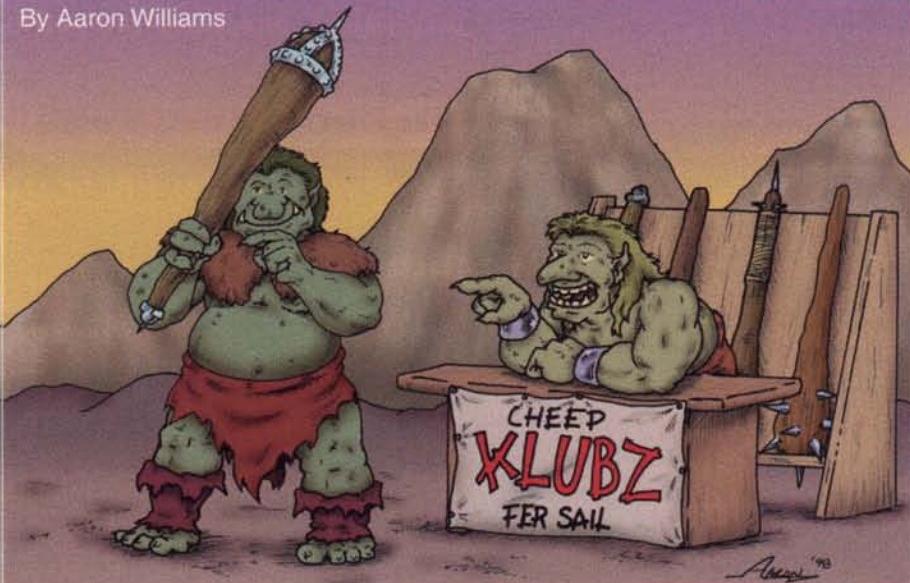
If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 254-2262 (U.S.A.).

Important: DRAGON Magazine does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

- ◆ Australian convention
- ✳ Canadian convention
- European convention
- Online convention

By Aaron Williams



"That latest model has a great 'point-and-clunk' interface."

SHOP KEEP

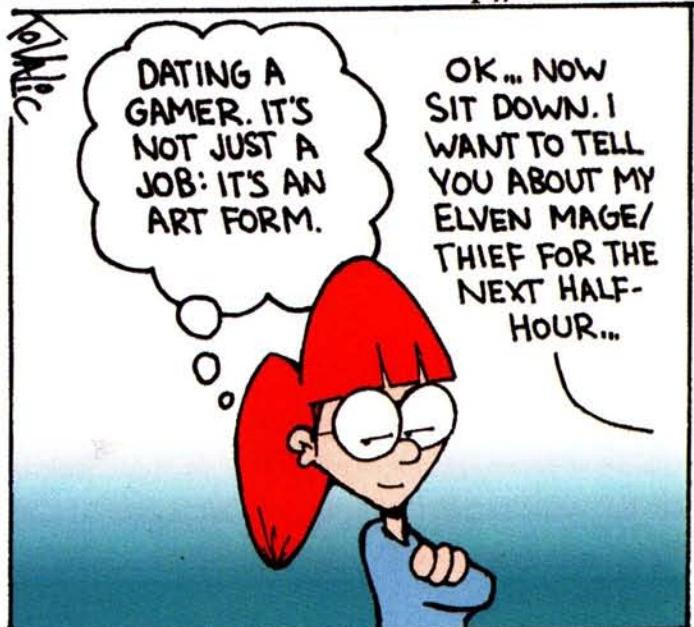
by JOHN KOVALIC



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DORK CENTRAL: <http://kovalic.com>





Role Models

Terrain Tactics

By Jim Bishop and JD Wiker

Photos by Craig Cudnohufsky

Sometimes it's extremely important to know not only the distance between the heroes and villains but also how far *above or below* each other they are. Many levels of terrain add new layers of strategy to maneuvering miniatures. The various settings of the ALTERNITY® game also allow for heroes and other characters to find themselves in zero gravity.

Movement Over Terrain

Aside from just creating an obstacle to line-of-sight, terrain can create a new kind of line-of-sight: higher ground. But getting there is the tricky part, requiring rules for moving up and down. For most purposes, there are four kinds of vertical movement: **easy**, **average**, **steep**, and **sheer**.

Building Basic Terrain

Here's how to build an airlock hatch set in a ship's hull, as featured in the sample scenario. First, cut out some irregular geometric shapes from a cereal box. Stick them to a flat piece of cardboard—say, the other side of the cereal box—with ordinary white glue. Put the finished piece underneath a large, heavy book, and leave it to dry.

When it's dried, paint the entire thing dark gray. Then, using the dry-brushing technique explained in issue #258 to highlight the edges of the raised portions with a lighter gray. Add some lettering, paint on a small "control panel," and the airlock is ready to go!

Easy vertical movement means a shallow slope. This sort of climb is so easy that it doesn't significantly impede movement: Heroes moving up can do so at their normal rate, but moving at a run or sprint requires a fatigue check afterward. Heroes running or sprinting down do so without the fatigue check but must make a Movement check to avoid stumbling and suffering falling damage. The distance of the "fall" is equal to the hero's walking movement rate. (After all, there's plenty of solid ground on which the hero can slow down.)

Average slopes are the kind that wind an ordinary person and slow down an athletic one. All movement is reduced to half, whether up or down, and requires a fatigue check—though with a -1 step bonus for heroes moving down.

Steep grades are those that are about half walk and half climb; characters cannot ascend or descend without the use of their hands. Movement on steep slopes is reduced to walking rate, either up or down, and requires a fatigue check, with no modifiers for direction.

Finally, **sheer** vertical movement is the kind accomplished by only climbing. Rules for climbing are listed on page 66 of the ALTERNITY Player's Handbook. In fortunate cases, a hero has a ladder to help the climb. In any case, a hero climbing up or down should make a fatigue check afterward, with a +1 step penalty for climbing up with handholds and footholds, and a +2 step penalty for climbing a surface without them.

Movement in Zero Gravity

Of course, moving in microgravity assumes that there is something for the heroes to grab onto. The ALTERNITY rules state that all heroes can function in zero gravity, but that heroes with Acrobatics-zero-g training function better. What this means is that whenever the Gamemaster calls for a check on a Strength- or Dexterity-based skill, a failure results in the hero moving away from the nearest solid surface at a rate equal to 1 meter per phase.

If the check results in a Critical Failure,



After decorating a cereal box with various cardboard shapes, paint the finished structure for some cheap terrain that looks great.



Hal won't open the pod bay doors!

the hero's rate of movement is 5 meters per phase. The direction of movement is often fairly obvious. When it isn't, the Gamemaster should consult the Scatter Diagram on page 47 of the *Gamemaster Guide*.

Obviously, only heroes with zero-g experience should try anything fancy in open space, and even in enclosed environments, the hero is liable to get hurt. For heroes who strike a solid object while "falling" at the rate of 1 meter per phase, the distance fallen is considered extremely short. For heroes traveling at 5 meters per phase, the damage is considered short.

Representing zero gravity with miniatures is the fun part. If the miniature itself isn't terribly heavy, the players can make wire stands out of gardening wire. Just create a large loop at the bottom for a "base," and a smaller loop at the top. Tape the figure's base to the smaller loop, and the miniature is floating in space.

Get That Door Open

In this scenario, the heroes move in zero gravity while they try to open an airlock door. Forced out the airlock of a spaceship by pirates, the heroes must override the entry codes and get inside. Assume that the tabletop is the ship's hull and effectively "down." Place the miniatures on the map over and around the airlock.

When they had to leave the ship, the heroes had only enough time to don e-suits—not to grab the other gear available for space-walking. They will not be able to tether themselves together unless at least one of them has some sort of line.

Unfortunately, the rest of the pirate boarding party—outside the ship themselves—want to get in the airlock as well and are working their way toward the hatch. Like the heroes,

they are wearing soft e-suits. Unlike the heroes, the pirates have magnetic boots (*Player's Handbook*, page 142), enabling them to move normally—though somewhat more slowly—on the ship's hull.

There are six pirates in all, and their goal is to kill or drive off the heroes before all the heroes get inside the airlock and seal the external hatch. One hero concentrating on opening the door can open it in 2 rounds, and it takes another 2 rounds to close it again. The door will not reopen while the airlock is pressurizing.

Pirates

STR	9 (0)	INT	9 (0)
DEX	8 (0)	WIL	7 (0)
CON	9	PER	6

Durability: 9/9/4/4

Action Check: 9+/8/4/2

Move: sprint 16, run 10, walk 4

Actions Per Round: 2

Attacks

Brawl	11/5/2	d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s	LI/O
9mm Charge Pistol	10/5/2	d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m	HI/O

JD Wiker painted all of the miniatures for this article while on the set of *Apollo 13*. Jim Bishop is still hoping that HAL will open the pod bay doors.

A R E S™

VAMPIRE FX in THE ALTERNITY® GAME

LEGACY OF THE DRAGON

BY SEAN K REYNOLDS

ILLUSTRATED BY MARK NELSON

Since the publication of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* in 1897, vampires have been a favorite villain in literature, theater, and cinema. Creatures with the gift—and curse—of immortality, vampires enthrall us with their timeless passion and their strange need for human blood. In recent decades, vampires have been romanticized further as authors, screenwriters, and even roleplayers have considered the classic story from the vampire's point of view. More than bloodthirsty monsters, these beings might have subtle political, social, or personal agendas. This sort of vampire makes an excellent villain for an ALTERNITY® game in either the STAR*DRIVE® or the DARK•MATTER™ setting.

A HISTORY IN BLOOD

The legacy of the vampire began in the Romanian state of Wallachia, just south of Transylvania. Its ruler, Vlad Tepes, was feared for his habit of impaling petty criminals and even—if the tales are to be believed—of drinking human blood. He became known as Vlad the Impaler and Vlad Dracula, a name taken from his father, a member of the Order of the Dragon—a military order created by the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund to defeat the Turks. In the local tongue, the word "dragon" was *dracul*, and "dracula" meant "of the Dragon" or even "of the Devil."

Dracula's region of Eastern Europe had always been unstable, and Vlad took the throne three times in his life before finally being assassinated in 1476 or 1477. Exactly how he came to rise as a vampire remains a mystery, but the speculation is boundless. Some claim that the atrocities he committed encouraged a demon to "reward" him with an undead existence. Others suggest that Dracula unearthed a lost spell of blood-sorcery and that his odd habits were part of an elaborate ritual to achieve eternal life.

In any case, Dracula dug himself out of his grave, somehow repaired his mangled corpse—his decapitated head had been taken to the Turkish emperor to prove he was dead—and began a new, dark existence. He spent the next century quietly indulging his sadistic urges, learning the secrets of his unnatural powers in secrecy. Only when he had mastered his new abilities did he retake power and avenge himself against the families of those who had wronged him.

When Dracula discovered his ability to create more vampires, he began selecting ruthless mortals who demonstrated a propensity for obedience to a powerful master. Those who were strong but stupid he made ghouls; those who demonstrated intelligence were granted a more terrible gift. Upon these human predators, Dracula bestowed what he fancifully termed the "kiss of the dragon," avoiding the more vulgar "vampire," a word too similar to "parasite" for his taste. Likewise, Dracula's undead disciples call themselves "dragons," setting themselves above mortals and among the most fabulous creatures of legend.

CHILDREN OF THE DRAGON

While Vlad and his fledgling dragons strove to keep themselves hidden, their bloodthirsty natures occasionally spun out of control, resulting in messy, traceable, or public killings. As a result, vampire hysteria swept Europe several times in the 17th and 18th centuries, notably in the cases of Peter Plogojowitz and Arnold Paole. The two men were reported to have been walking about after their deaths, and their bodies appeared extremely lifelike when disinterred, with fresh blood on their mouths. By the late 18th century, the existence of vampires was accepted as truth by the more credible members of the general public, and the undead began appearing

VAMPIRES IN THE DARK•MATTER SETTING

In a DARK•MATTER campaign, vampires could easily be placed as allies of the Final Church; they both have an interest in power and bloody rituals, although the wiser vampires have learned caution and frown on the Church's more overt displays. A vampire might solicit the heroes to eliminate reckless members of the Final Church, or the Church could tip off the heroes to a vampire's location after it has made too many enemies within the organization.

In contrast, a vampire could be a target of groups such as the Hidden Order of St. Gregory or the Knights of Malta. Agents of the Order or the Knights could discover a vampire or its minions and recruit the heroes to help eliminate it, or the vampire could plant evidence incriminating one of the groups as being responsible for a previous conflict with the heroes. If these orders have a more sinister goal, this damning evidence could be true.

In either case, vampires have time on their side and aren't above trying to control both sides of a conflict. If necessary, they can pull the right strings to start fires in opposing groups, using the distraction to move to a safe location and hide for years until they are forgotten or assumed dead.

in poetry, prose, and theater, a trend that escalated in the 1800s.

At this point Vlad Dracula, already over four hundred years old, realized that the cat was out of the bag. At the same time, his emboldened dragons, weary of eking out an existence in desolate ruins and tombs, began whispering of travel and exploration. When word reached Dracula of this discontent, he struck down several of the more vocal "little dragons," as he called them. Others escaped their master's wrath and hid throughout the world to start their own small "families."

Gamemaster Note: If your campaign doesn't include vampires and you're considering using the *Tangents* supplement for the ALTERNITY game, Dracula's emergence as a vampire is a major point of divergence from your timeline. With *Tangents*, you could send your heroes into an alternate world where vampires exist or bring a vampire from that universe to the universe of the heroes.

VAMPIRES IN THE STAR*DRIVE SETTING

Hindered by their curious inability to travel between stars, vampires build power bases on a single planet and use ghouls to meddle in the affairs of other worlds.

A VoidCorp employee who happens to be a vampire doesn't have to worry about retiring before getting a choice promotion, and he or she has exceptional abilities to help win the rat race. Such a creature would make an excellent long-term foe, with employees in many systems and an annoying habit of never staying dead—perhaps sparking speculation about cloning, cybernetic brain downloads, and other inaccurate theories. A Rigunmor vampire would be in a similar position, having centuries to establish a mercantile empire, legally or criminally.

A young Orion vampire might find itself stranded in the frontier and dedicate itself to learning every part of that system, becoming an expert guide.

A Thuldan vampire would be in a unique position: physically superior to its neighbors—and therefore held as a model citizen. It is not truly human anymore, however, and is therefore at risk of being shunned or killed. Such a vampire might end up on the run from Thuldan assassins when its ruse is discovered and it is in need of help from sympathetic heroes (who probably won't be told its true nature).

THE BLOOD-DIMMED TIDE

Over the next century, these dragons created many lesser vampires to serve them, and Earth's undead population swelled to almost two hundred by 1850. Most of them flocked to the world's largest cities: London, New York, New Orleans, Paris, Beijing, and Cairo.

The War Between the States offered American vampires an opportunity to feed and spread quickly. Wounded soldiers tended to grasp at a chance to go on "living," and those who refused couldn't fight off a determined vampire. Thus, the undead population of the western hemisphere leaped again. The first and second World Wars did the same thing for Europe. By the end of the 20th century, there were close to 10,000 worldwide, although the vast majority of those were less than one hundred years old.

Life as a vampire in the Information Age was fun and easy. Vampires had been popularized in books, television, and film, and the goth lifestyle as well as a popular roleplaying game made "pretend" vampires commonplace. Eventually, few looked askance at strangely dressed pale kids who never went out in the day. If they claimed to be vampires, so what? This indifference allowed the vampires great freedom to move about at night, and the urban environments were inured to murders and disappearances, so feeding was easy.

Note: This time is before the start of the DARK•MATTER campaign setting. From this point onward, the timeline follows that of the STAR*DRIVE campaign setting.

DARK MATTER & DRIVESPACE

The popularity of false vampires waned in the early 21st century, and the dragons faded quietly into the background. The exploration of the planets in the next century didn't interest vampires, as their numbers were few enough, and food plentiful enough, that they didn't need to think about moving to cramped extraterran colonies. Even contact with the fraal in 2124 aroused little interest from the undead. The few accidental encounters between curious vampires and visiting fraal resulted in casualties on both sides, with rumors of the conflicts convincing most young vampires to leave the aliens alone.

As the human population continued to increase, even the vampires began to feel crowded. Fortunately, the invention of the stardrive acted as a release valve for this pressure as large numbers of humans left earth for new homes in the stars. Content to let their food-animals do the hard work of colonization, most vampires waited until the new planets were sufficiently populated before making the journey through drivespace. Those who made that journey were usually weaker vampires, underlings to others with power. With little hope of advancement at home, these lieutenant vampires thought they could make a

fresh start in a new territory where they would be the only ones of their kind. They were never heard from again.

When Earth-bound vampires investigated their missing brethren, they heard disturbing news: In every case, the star-bound vampires were found comatose in their cabins at some point during the five-day journey through drivespace. Each later died, apparently of severe malnutrition. Furthermore, their tissues showed signs of decay in line with a much older body. (The coroners didn't realize the corpses were vampires dead a hundred years or more.)

This news stirred the vampire community to uproar. Was there something wrong with those vampires? Foul play on the ship? Or something inherently dangerous in drivespace itself?

Elder vampires declared a ban on drivespace travel for their minions until the cause of "drivespace death" could be discovered. Naturally, the ban didn't stop desperate vampires from fleeing to the stars, hoping that the strange death wouldn't befall them. A few survived—but only the young and the weak.

Whatever the cause, vampires who succumbed to drivespace comas could not be contacted, even through mind-walking. The few fledglings who survived sent messages back to their fellows on Earth stating that they had survived. Young vampires everywhere began conspiring to leave their manipulative creators behind. As word spread, a mass exodus to space began in earnest. Even the young vampires didn't have permanent immunity to the mysterious trauma of drivespace. Swelled with confidence, many returned to earth to recruit their friends, only to arrive defenseless.

In response to the flight of young dragons, the elders began imprisoning their new fledglings, nurturing them carefully until they were thought to be too strong to make the journey. This had the effect of strengthening the bonds between master and fledgling, although resentment at their confinement turned many away from their seniors. These practices

Gamemaster Note: Any vampire who has rank 3 or greater in any vampire FX skill or who has an FX energy pool greater than its CON score succumbs to drivespace death; only the weakest can pass through drivespace safely. Those who observe a vampire carefully during transit notice that just before it collapses mindlessly, the vampire's face assumes a look of horror and pain.

had the ultimate effect of making those dragons who remained on earth both more powerful and more hateful.

AFTER THE LONG SILENCE

The First and Second Galactic wars had little effect upon the vampires; the wars never truly posed a threat to the large settlement on earth, and the numbers of vampires in a particular extra-solar system remained low, so even the loss of an entire inhabited planet would kill only a handful of them. When the Long Silence interrupted contact with the Verge, the vampires remained patient. When the relay at Kendai was rebuilt in 2496, Old-space vampires were eager to hear what had come of their Verger fledglings.

Now vampires feel less pressure to create progeny. Most planets in the Verge are home to only one or two vampires, and the vampires like it that way. There are plenty of resources to share, they are generally wealthy enough to live in luxury, and they have little interest in creating young vampires that are likely to run off and start their own power bases. The vampires in the STAR*DRIVE campaign setting are reclusive, gently manipulative, and wanting nothing. They're also stuck where they are, and have learned to like their chosen world.

ROLEPLAYING THE UNDEAD

Vampires are patient. If confronted with a problem they cannot solve soon, they think nothing of hiding for a few years or decades, in which time a solution might have presented itself—or the "problem" might have died of old age. Having transcended death, vampires see themselves as superior to living creatures. It's difficult to have respect for a creature that one considers food.

This attitude makes vampires even more loathed and feared by those who know their true nature, even by those who work for them. It certainly doesn't help that a vampire is willing to sacrifice its living employees—and even its own progeny—to save its own cold skin.

Many vampires fashion themselves tragic villains—the embrace of undeath has deprived them of many of the pleasures they enjoyed in life, and seeing the people they knew in life age and die while they stay the same tends to shake the most hardened souls. Many cling to

the places they frequented in life, pursue the same interests, or develop an unnatural attachment for the descendants of the people they knew when they were still alive, observing, guarding, or stalking these people from the darkness of night.

Vampires come from all walks of life, their unnatural births having been engendered by other vampires for any number of purposes. A vampire created to be a bodyguard probably was the sort of person who fought a lot in life, while a diplomat in life might be made a vampire to infiltrate genteel vampiric society. And there is always the chance that one is made into a vampire for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, only to be discarded by its creator when it has served its purpose.

Vampires don't have to be human, which can create some interesting situations. Imagine a fraal vampire with an eternity to develop its mindwalker abilities—or does its dead brain now lack the ability to channel psionic energy, making the vampire a psionic cripple? A vampire weren could be an immortal

philosopher, or a killer locked in an anti-technological mindset more primitive than any of its living, learning, evolving brethren. A vampiric t'sa might be faster than the wind but lack the technical creativity that makes its eternal life tolerable. Perhaps a mechalus vampire sees its condition as the next step in evolution beyond the flesh, or perhaps its internal circuitry and nanites are now as inert and unresponsive as a burned-out computer terminal. These sorts of conflicts drive the psychoses of the vampire, distancing it from those who are still alive.

BASIC VAMPIRE RULES

BLOOD AND FX ENERGY

Vampires are best known for their need for blood, which allows them to perpetuate their undead existence as well as to fuel their supernatural powers. In game terms, a vampire's blood energy is represented by a variant of the FX rules in the ALTERNITY Gamemaster Guide.

A vampire can have a maximum number of FX points equal to its CON +1 for every one hundred years it has existed as a vampire. Each night when a



THE FIRST FEW ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN VAMPIRES AND THE ENIGMATIC FRAAL RESULTED IN CASUALTIES ON BOTH SIDES—AS WELL AS THE FIRST FRAAL VAMPIRES.

CROSS-SPECIES BLOOD COMPATIBILITY

Vampire Species	Fraal	Human	Mech.	Sesh.	T'sa	Weren
Fraal	1.0	0.8	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.6
Human	0.7	1.0	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.8
Mechalus	0.3	0.7	1.0	0.3	0.4	0.6
Sesheyen	0.7	0.6	0.2	1.0	0.5	0.6
T'sa	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.5	1.0	0.7
Weren	0.5	0.8	0.3	0.5	0.8	1.0

Multiply the victim's species compatibility by the amount of blood taken (victim's CON points) to determine the amount of blood (FX points) useful to the vampire.

vampire awakens, it automatically loses 1 FX point from its current total as its body uses the power of its stolen blood to maintain itself. If it has no FX points when it comes time to awaken, the vampire immediately suffers 1 wound point and does not rise from its slumber. If deprived for too long, the inert vampire eventually consumes all of its wound and mortal points in an effort to extend its existence, finally dying a true death when it has no more points to spend. An inert vampire can be fed blood, causing it to awaken, but it cannot heal in this fashion. The vampire must actively feed to recover FX points for anything other than awakening.

A vampire can regain FX points only by consuming blood—sentient creature blood, animal blood, and stored blood are all acceptable. The blood from members of the vampire's species is much more effective, as described in the **Cross-Species Blood Compatibility** chart.

A humanoid creature contains enough blood to replenish a number of vampiric FX points equal to its CON score, so a human with CON 10 can satiate almost any vampire, whereas a weak, small, or young creature with CON 5 is not as filling. Animal blood is not as satisfying to a vampire as is human blood, providing FX points equal to 30% of the creature's CON, rounded up.

A vampire does not need to drain all of a victim's blood—in fact, doing so is wasteful. A vampire can drain up to 20% of a target's blood without harming the victim; beyond that, blood drain inflicts 1 wound point per FX point drained. A creature drained of half its blood needs serious medical attention; a creature that has lost all of its blood dies. Creatures regain 1 FX point worth of blood every 2 weeks as long as they eat normally and

drink sufficient fluids. A smart vampire drains a little blood from several different victims each night, inflicting no serious harm and avoiding suspicion.

FEEDING

The vampire has often been depicted as erotic because of its deadly kiss. As long as a target is unsuspecting of the vampire's intent, no attack roll is needed to break the skin and begin feeding. An unwilling target must be forced into a position where the vampire can feed, which requires an overbearing roll. (See the Unarmed Attack broad skill.) Once bitten, a victim must make a successful *Resolve-mental resolve* roll at a +1 step penalty or surrender to the pleasurable sensation of the vampire's feeding; those who succeed can act for 1 round before making another check.

A vampire can consume 1 FX point of blood per round feeding. (Each phase gathers $\frac{1}{4}$ FX point, but fractional points are not able to wake a sleeping vampire or power their abilities, so most vampires attempt to feed for at least an entire round.) Unless the vampire's attack is especially violent or overzealous, the wound is only a small pair of punctures that stop bleeding a few seconds after the vampire withdraws.

The vampire must make mouth-to-skin contact to feed, making those in body tanks unsuitable targets and weren or t'sa a serious challenge.

VAMPIRE FLAWS

While they are immortal and can do things outside the realm of the natural world, vampires are limited by their diet and have certain mundane vulnerabilities. These are treated as Flaws, giving the vampire extra character points, which are normally used to purchase

vampiric FX skills. (See Optional Powers.) All vampires begin unlife with the Pallor (6), Vulnerability to Sunlight (9), and Vulnerability to Fire (9) flaws. While it is possible to buy off vampiric flaws with achievement points (at the standard rate of 2x the cost of the flaw), GMs should be hesitant to allow such a thing except for very old vampires that have had time to explore and overcome the weaknesses of their bodies.

PALLOR

+3/6 Bonus Skill Points, WIL

Vampires are essentially cold, unbreathing, walking corpses. Their appearance is distracting, unnerving, or downright repulsive, so vampires suffer a +1 step penalty on all Personality-based skill checks (not including vampire FX skill checks). Vampires that have fed recently (within 1 hour per FX point acquired in its last feeding) can ignore this step penalty. For 6 bonus skill points, a vampire is cadaverous and wasted, increasing the step penalty to +2. A vampire with this level of flaw can reduce the step penalty to +1 only after feeding.

TERRIBLE THIRST

+4/6 Bonus Skill Points, WIL

The vampire's need for blood is much greater than normal. Each day, the vampire must make a WIL roll to resist hunting that evening. Furthermore, when feeding, the vampire must make a WIL roll to stop feeding after 20% of the target's blood has been taken; the vampire can make additional rolls to stop after every additional 20% of the target's blood has been drained. For 6 bonus skill points, these WIL rolls are made at a +1 step penalty.

VULNERABILITY TO FIRE

+3/6/9 Bonus Skill Points, CON

While protected against most mortal frailties, undead flesh is especially susceptible to fire. Any fire or heat attacks inflict an extra 1, 2, or 3 points of damage to the vampire, depending upon the level of this flaw. A vampire confronted with a significant source of fire (at least a torch) must make a WIL roll at a +0, +1, or +2 step penalty (depending on the level of the flaw) or else retreat; larger fires give additional penalties at the GM's discretion.

VULNERABILITY TO SUNLIGHT

+3/6/9 Bonus Skill Points, CON

Nothing inspires dread in vampires like the sun. Something in sunlight interacts with the undead tissue of a vampire's body, causing it to wither rapidly. A vampire in sunlight suffers damage every phase of exposure. For 3 bonus skill points, the damage is 1d4w. For 6 bonus skill points, the damage is 1d4+1w. For 9 bonus skill points, the damage is 2d4+1w. Obscured or filtered sunlight degrades the damage by one category. Note that wound damage degraded to stun damage in this manner is not recovered at the end of a scene! Certain stars might have less or more of whatever causes this damage; star systems of the former type would be havens for vampires, while even moonlight (reflected sunlight) in the latter systems might be deadly.

VULNERABILITY (UNUSUAL)

+3/6/9 Bonus Skill Points, CON

There are so many differing legends about vampires that their weaknesses are never certain. This flaw reflects lesser known vulnerabilities causing additional damage when the appropriate attack is made. For 3 bonus skill points, the vampire is vulnerable to an uncommon substance and suffers +1 point of damage from attacks from that material or is vulnerable to a rare substance and suffers +2 points of damage. For 6 bonus skill points, the material is common and inflicts +1 point or it is uncommon and inflicts +2 points or is rare and inflicts +3 points. For 9 bonus skill points the material is common and inflicts +2 points or it is uncommon and inflicts +3 points or is rare and inflicts +4 points. Common substances are running water, garlic, steel, electricity, and wood. Uncommon substances are acid, silver, holy water, or a particular type of wood (traditionally ash in eastern European legends). Rare materials include platinum, uranium, and holy relics.

WASTEFUL METABOLISM

+3/6 Bonus Skill Points, CON

The vampire requires more FX energy than usual to rouse itself from its daytime slumber. For 3 bonus skill points, the vampire expends 2 FX points to wake; for 6 bonus skill points, the vampire must spend 3 FX points to awaken.

STANDARD VAMPIRE POWERS

All vampires have the following skills; no skill points must be spent to acquire them, and they have no rank benefits (unlike the Optional Powers).

KISS OF THE DRAGON

1 FX energy point

No skill check required.

A vampire can create a new vampire by draining all blood from a victim and then expending 1 FX point just before the victim dies; this FX point expenditure represents the feeding of some of the vampire's blood to the victim. The targeted creature rises from its state of apparent death in (24 - CON) hours with its original abilities, all of the base powers of a vampire, and 0 FX energy points; it also has at least the standard vampire flaws and any other vampire flaws its creator possessed at the time of the attack. This new vampire is considered to be under its creator's Blood Charm. It may learn Optional Powers (by using normal skill points or points from its vampire flaws).

VAMPIRE FLAWS

Flaw	+SP	Ability
Pallor	+3/6	WIL
Terrible Thirst	+4/6	WIL
Vulnerability:		
Fire	+3/6/9	CON
Sunlight	+3/6/9	CON
Unusual	+3/6/9	CON
Wasteful Metabolism	+3/6	CON

BLOOD CHARM

1+ FX energy points

No skill check required.

Vampire blood is intoxicating, and those who taste it find it hard to resist the commands of the vampire that gave it. To use this power, the vampire must feed a target at least 1 FX point worth of blood. For each FX point of vampire's blood consumed, the feeder must make a Resolve-mental resolve check with a +1 step penalty to resist the vampire's commands. This penalty is reduced by 1 step for each week after the feeding, the charm vanishing when the penalty drops to +0 steps. This power works on intelligent creatures, animals, and even other vampires.



INTERSPECIES FEEDING IS LESS BENEFICIAL TO A VAMPIRE,
BUT BEGGARS CAN'T BE CHOOSERS OUT ON THE VERGE.

OPTIONAL VAMPIRE POWERS	
Skill	Cost
Vampire Strength	
<i>Animal Form</i>	5
<i>Claws</i>	2
<i>Might of the Dragon</i>	3
Vampire Dexterity	
<i>Hunter's Speed</i>	4
<i>Wall Crawling</i>	2
Vampire Constitution	
<i>Embrace the Earth</i>	2
<i>Undead Endurance</i>	3
<i>Mist Form</i>	5
Vampire Will	
<i>Confuse Memories</i>	4
<i>Flight</i>	3
<i>Horizontal Levitation</i>	1
<i>Invisibility</i>	2
Vampire Personality	
<i>Blood Telepathy</i>	3
<i>Call of the Dragon</i>	4
<i>Fear</i>	3
<i>Mesmerize</i>	4

CREATE GOUL

1+ FX Energy Point

No skill check required.

Vulnerable to sunlight, a vampire needs agents who can travel during the day. Most use creatures known as ghouls: living beings who have tasted the blood of vampires. Vampires empower ghouls by donating FX points (in the form of blood). Ghouls can spend these FX points to activate the discretionary powers Undead Endurance and Might of the Dragon as if they had rank 1 in either of those FX skills. They cannot improve these abilities beyond rank 1. Unused FX points fade at a rate of 1 per week as the ghoul's body metabolizes the vampire's blood, so most vampires feed their ghoul at least once a week to maintain the ghoul's abilities (as well as to reinforce the Blood Charm). Note that FX points spent by a ghoul to power its abilities are still considered "active" in its body for the purpose of being beholden to the Blood Charm. Ghouls have none of the vulnerabilities of vampires, but sometimes they develop bad personal hygiene habits and unusual appetites (such as a preference for raw meat). It is possible to make animals into ghouls, although they tend to expend their FX

points as soon as they find themselves in a hostile situation.

IMPROVED ABILITIES

0 FX energy points

No skill check required.

All vampires gain a +1 bonus to CON and a +1 to either STR or DEX. Increased abilities might exceed racial maximums, and secondary effects (such as increased durability, resistance modifiers, and so on) still apply. These increases occur when the vampire is created and require no FX points to activate.

REGENERATION

1 FX energy point

No skill check required.

Vampires can use the supernatural vigor of their stolen blood to repair damage to their bodies. A vampire can spend 1 FX point to heal 1 mortal point, 2 wound points, or 3 stun points (even if the damage was caused by sunlight). Even phenomenal wounds such as amputations can be healed with this power. Vampires do not heal wound and mortal damage through rest and medical treatment, so they must use this power to recover from injuries.

RESISTANCE TO HARM

0 FX energy points

No skill check required.

Many things that would inconvenience or kill a living being have no effect on vampires simply because they are not alive. Extreme cold, many poisons, drowning, suffocation, moderate radiation, and even vacuum are inconsequential to beings that don't require body heat and lack metabolism. This lack of a living metabolism allows vampires to shrug off a great deal of physical damage; all vampires have an armor value of +2/+2/+0. These values can be improved with the Undead Endurance optional power or conventional armor. Finally, a vampire has 2 additional stun and wound points and 1 additional mortal point; these do not count toward the number of wound or mortal points that can be purchased as achievement benefits. This power does not use FX points.

Vampires are never dazed from losing more than half of their wound points or losing any number of mortal points,

although certain attacks might still give the vampire appropriate penalties. For example, a vampire that gets its right arm mangled in a piece of machinery (taking 2 mortals in the process) won't have any penalties to its actions unless they specifically involve that arm (such as firing a pistol or attempting to use a keypad with that hand). Likewise, they never suffer fatigue damage.

A vampire that loses all of its stun or wound points is knocked unconscious for the remainder of that round. Unlike a living creature, the vampire may begin making Stamina-endurance checks at the beginning of the very next round. If the vampire was knocked out by stun damage, a success restores 2, 4, or 6 stun points (depending upon the degree of success), and the vampire can act normally that round. If knocked out due to wounds, a successful Stamina-endurance check allows the vampire to awaken and act normally that round, even though it has no wound points available!

OPTIONAL POWERS

While all vampires share the same Base Powers, individuals usually focus their supernatural talents in a few areas. These are the optional powers, FX specialty skills sorted under five broad skills, each tied to one of the six Abilities: Vampire Strength, Vampire Dexterity, and so on. Every vampire starts with all five of these broad skills for free but must purchase the FX specialty skills just like any other sorts of skills. Non-vampires cannot use any of these skills, nor can these specialty skills be used untrained.

All of these specialty skills require FX energy points to activate. Unless otherwise noted, each specialty skill requires an activation cost of 1 FX point. Using a broad skill instead of one of the specialty skills costs 1 extra FX point; if the skill roll is successful, the specialty skill operates as if the vampire had rank 1 in that skill.

Those Vampire FX skills identified as "Extended duration" can be extended automatically by expending FX energy points equal to the number needed to activate the skill. This must be done while the skill is activated, and it doubles the increment of its initial duration. Extending the skill in this manner does not require another skill roll.

VAMPIRE STRENGTH

ANIMAL FORM

When activated, this power allows a vampire to assume the form of a wolf or a large bat. The vampire retains its intelligence, special abilities, and skills (although it might have difficulty using them in animal form), but can attack as an animal of the appropriate type (using the damage ratings for the assumed form). The movement rate and senses of the animal are also acquired. (Use the *Gamemaster Guide* statistics for Dog, Attack and Alien, Avian for the wolf and bat forms.) Normal animals of the same kind as the assumed shape sense the vampire is not a true animal, but this can be overcome with other vampire abilities. The transformation costs 2 FX points to activate, and reverts after 10 minutes.

Extended duration.

CLAWS

Although their hands usually are indistinguishable from those of the living, vampires can channel their undead energy to turn their hands into weapons capable of causing grievous damage. The power gives the vampire claws that inflict d4+1w/d4+2w/d4+3w (LI damage) plus the vampire's STR bonus; this change lasts 5 rounds, and the vampire uses the Unarmed Attack or *brawl* skills for combat rolls.

Increased Damage: At rank 5, the damage increases to d4+2w/d4+3w/d4m plus STR bonus; at rank 10 it increases to d4+3w/d4m/d4+1m plus STR bonus.

Extended duration.

MIGHT OF THE DRAGON

When activated, this power gives a vampire a temporary one-point increase to STR. Furthermore, the vampire may jump double the distance traveled by an Athletics-jump skill roll. This power lasts 5 rounds.

Heightened Strength: At rank 6, the bonuses increase to +2 to STR and triple the jumping distance; at rank 12, the bonuses become +3 to STR quadruple the jumping distance.

Extended duration.

VAMPIRE DEXTERITY

HUNTER'S SPEED

Vampires are famous for their power to move faster than the eye can track. This

power gives the vampire a +1 increase to its DEX and its combat movement rate increases to 150% of normal. This lasts 5 rounds.

Increased Speed: At rank 4, the vampire gains an extra action every round that this power is active. At rank 6, the vampire gains another +1 to its DEX score. At rank 8, the vampire's combat movement rate increases to 200% of normal. At rank 12, the vampire gains a -1 step bonus to its action check score.

WALLCRAWLING

This power allows a vampire to walk upon any solid surface (regardless of orientation) as if on a normal floor. Thus, a vampire could walk or run up the side of a wall, or even stand upside-down on a ceiling. Once activated, the power lasts 10 minutes.

Extended duration.

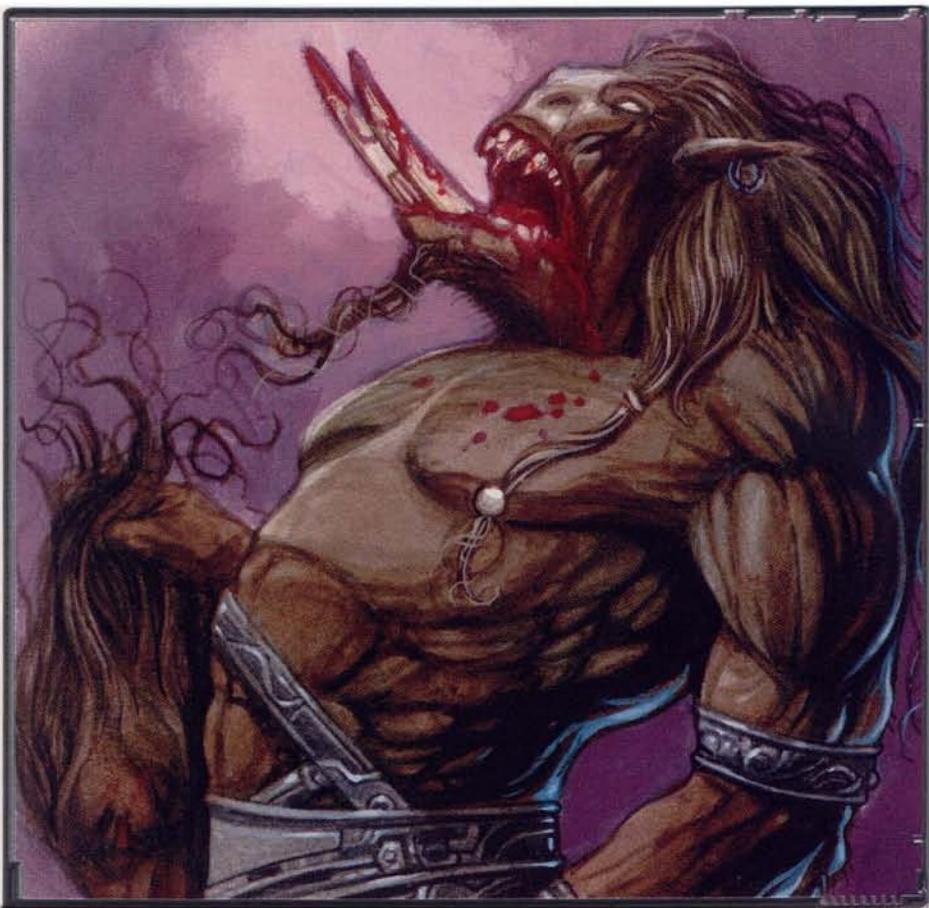
VAMPIRE CONSTITUTION

EMBRACE THE EARTH

This power allows a vampire to push aside normal earth as if it were water

and sink below its surface. The vampire must be in contact with soil, not asphalt, concrete, or stone. When the power is activated, the vampire sinks 2 meters underground, leaving no indication of its passage and remaining concealed indefinitely (although it continues to feel hunger and reacts to stimuli, such as being exhumed). Another activation of this skill allows the vampire to float upward to the surface of the earth. Alternatively, the vampire can use normal strength to dig itself free.

Greater Embrace: At rank 4, the vampire can enter a state of hibernation while underground; the vampire only metabolizes 1 FX energy point's worth of blood every week instead of every day. At rank 8, the vampire's hibernating metabolism slows further, consuming 1 FX energy point worth of blood every month, and at rank 12 this increment increases to once a year. Note that none of these changes affect an active vampire's need for blood; only when hibernating under the earth does this benefit apply.



NOTHING IS MORE TERRIFYING THAN A WEREWOLF—
UNLESS YOU COUNT A VAMPIRE WEREWOLF.

UNDEAD ENDURANCE

This enhances a vampire's power to shrug off damage that would kill a mortal. When activated, the vampire's armor increases by +1/+1/+1 for 5 rounds.

Increased Endurance: At rank 6, the vampire's armor increases by an additional +1/+1/+1. At rank 10, the vampire only suffers damage from sunlight every other phase.

MIST FORM

This power allows a vampire to assume a mistlike form that can pass through porous barriers and is almost invulnerable. In mist form, the vampire can fly in any direction at its walking rate and has armor protection of 2d4+1 (LI)/2d4+1 (HI)/0 (En). This mist form can make no attacks but can hamper vision in an area 2 meters in diameter. The transformation lasts 5 rounds and costs 2 FX points to activate.

Extended duration.

VAMPIRE WILL

CONFUSE MEMORIES

This allows a vampire to cloud the thoughts of a person. The vampire stares into the eyes of its victim, who must make a WIL roll (penalized by the vampire's WIL resistance modifier). If this roll is a failure, the target loses all memories from the past 5 minutes.

FLIGHT

The vampire can fly at its fly combat movement rate in any direction. It can carry up to 15x its STR in kilograms while flying (including its own equipment). Each activation lasts 10 minutes.

Increased Speed: At ranks 3, 6, 9, and 12, the vampire's flight speed increases by 25% of its base Flight movement rate.

Extended duration.

HORIZONTAL LEVITATION

Unlike the Flight vampire FX skill, this power allows the vampire to rise a short distance into the air (no more than 1 meter) and "fly" at this height at its normal movement rate. Aside from looking eerie, this allows a vampire to travel silently and pass ground-based obstacles such as burning coals, pools of dangerous chemicals, and so on. The vampire is considered to be moving at its ground-based movement speed, only in the air

(so it still suffers penalties to its actions for running, sprinting, and all-out movement). If its moves over a space where the ground is much lower (such as a pit), it falls downward normally but "lands" a meter in the air, unharmed. Each activation lasts 5 minutes.

Extended duration.

INVISIBILITY

This power allows a vampire to remain undetected by living things by clouding their minds rather than by manipulating light. All creatures attempting to spot the vampire suffer a +3 step penalty on all rolls made to do so (including Awareness-perception checks). Once this power is activated, the vampire remains concealed for 5 minutes, after which time the penalty vanishes. Note that beings carrying cameras (or with cybernetic senses) exposed to this power cannot see the vampire, as the observer's brain ignores the data the device transmits; only later review (if the images are recorded) can reveal the vampire's presence. At rank 4, the vampire can fool the sense of smell as well, concealing it from dogs and other creatures that rely on that sense more than sight. At rank 8, the penalty from this power increases to +5.

Extended duration.

VAMPIRE PERSONALITY

BLOOD TELEPATHY

This power allows a vampire to mentally contact its victims or those who have drank its blood. This contact has a maximum range of 10 meters and lasts 5 minutes. The vampire can converse with the target as if he or she were physically present. The vampire must concentrate for an entire round to activate this power, and can speak normally with those in its presence, although if wounded it must make a Stamina-endurance check with a +1 step penalty to maintain contact.

Increased Range: At ranks 4, 8, and 12, the range increases to 100 m, 1 km, and 10 km respectively.

Extended duration.

CALL OF THE DRAGON

The vampire sends out a silent empathic call to animals of a certain type (wolves, bats, or rats). At least one animal of that

type within the range of the vampire's voice responds to the call, arriving in d4+1 rounds. The animals are not under the vampire's control, but they are not hostile to the vampire and react according to their instincts (possibly attacking or fleeing from other beings in the area). Normally, 1 wolf, 10 bats, or 20 rats respond to the call. If there are no animals of the requested type, the call has no effect. Appropriate substitutions can be made for animals (dogs for wolves, ravens for bats, mice for rats, and so on). The animals remain in the area for at least 5 rounds.

Improved Call: At ranks 3, 6, 9, and 12, multiply the number of animals called by 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively.

FEAR

This power enhances the unnatural presence of the vampire, causing target to flee or even to collapse from terror. The target must be close enough to see the facial features of the vampire (no more than 6 meters away) and can make a WIL roll to resist. A Failure indicates the target flees, while a Critical Failure means the target falls and curls into a helpless fetal position. Either effect lasts 10 minutes, although intervention by other characters might aid the target.

Greater Fear: The vampire can affect an additional target with each use at ranks 3, 6, 9, and 12.

MESMERIZE

By looking into a target's eyes and making an Ordinary complex skill check, a vampire can briefly influence the target creature's mind. Victims who fail a WIL roll are subject to the vampire's commands for the next minute. The vampire can command either simple or complex actions, which the target must perform until the power wears off. The vampire can even plant a suggestion in the mind of the target that can be triggered at any pre-determined cue or time during the duration of the effect.

Increased Duration: At ranks 4, 8, and 12, the duration of the effect doubles.

Sean Reynolds has often been mistaken for a faral vampire, but we've seen him in full daylight with only the slightest ill effects.

LADY BATHORY

Human (Vampire) Diplomat (Free Agent specialty), level 16

STR	8 [-1]	INT	11 [+1]
DEX	10	WIL	10
CON	10	PER	11 [+1]

Durability: 12/12/6/—

Action Check: 12+/11/5/2

Move: sprint 18, run 12, walk 4

#Actions: 2

Reaction score: Good/2

Last Resorts: 2

Perks: Great Looks

Flaws: Phobia—*claustrophobia* (moderate), Temper (moderate, triggered by incompetence or insolence), Vulnerability to Sunlight (moderate), Wasteful Metabolism (severe)

FX Energy Points: 19 (+1 for every century she survives after 1914)

Motivation: Personal Power

Moral Attitude: Despicable, Unscrupulous

Traits: Amoral, Foppish

Attacks

Knife	9/4/2	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4+3w	HI/O
Claws	11/5/2	d4+2w/d4+3w/d4m	LI/O

Defenses

Resistance to Harm +2/+2/0

Skills: Athletics [8]; Melee Weapons—*blade* [11]; Unarmed Attack [8]—*brawl* [11]; Stamina [10]—*endurance* [13]; Knowledge [11]—*anatomy* [15], *Hungarian* [14, native tongue], *German* [14], *Latin* [14], *Spanish* [13]; Law [11]; Awareness [10]—*perception* [13]; Creativity [10]—*torture* [15]; Culture



[11]—*etiquette* (European nobility) [14]; Interaction [11]—*charm* [14], *intimidate* [14], *seduce* [14]

Base Powers: Kiss of the Dragon, Charm of Blood, Create Ghoul, Feeding, Improved Abilities, Regeneration, Resistance to Harm

Discretionary Powers: Vampire Strength [7]—*claws* [12]; Vampire Dexterity [10]—*speed of the night hunter* [12]; Vampire Constitution [10]—*endurance of unlife* [12]; Survival [10]; Vampire Will [9]—*confuse memories* [11]; Vampire Personality [10]—*blood telepathy* [12], *fear* [13]

Gear: Torture equipment (in suitcase), attractive clothing

In 1560, Elisabeth Bathory was born in Hungary. At age 15, she was wedded to Count Ferencz Nadasdy, known by his Turkish foes "Black Knight of Hungary" for his love of battle. While her husband was on campaign, Elisabeth sought diversions among her aunt's decadent friends, including practitioners of black magic. Through them she acquired a taste for torturing insolent servants to death. During one of her husband's longer absences, Elisabeth had an affair with a pale, dark-eyed stranger who some scholars of the arcane believe was Dracula.

In her mid-twenties Elisabeth began to fear that she was losing her youthful looks. When a servant combed her hair too hard, the countess struck the girl hard enough to draw blood, which fell upon Elisabeth's hand. To Elisabeth, the blood appeared to restore the youthful skin. With her evil cohorts, she soon began a practice of torturing virgin girls to death for their blood; such activities often left her drenched in blood, which gave rise to the rumor that she bathed in the blood of virgins.

After her husband's death, Elisabeth continued her deadly hobby. Eventually the peasant blood stopped keeping her young, and her cohorts told her that the blood of nobles

would be needed thereafter. She established an academy at her castle, ostensibly to educate young noblewomen and make them more valuable for marriage. The ruse allowed her easy access to new victims.

Elisabeth became careless, and she was eventually seen tossing the bodies of four women from the parapets of the castle. The crown sent Elisabeth's cousin, Count Thurzo, to investigate. Thurzo discovered her underground torture chamber, several bodies, and a blood-covered Elisabeth revelling in her work. Her accomplices were convicted of vampirism, paganism, and witchcraft and were tortured and executed. Elisabeth herself was charged only with murder and never appeared in court due to her noble lineage, despite the fact that a ledger was found in her own handwriting that indicated that over 650 virgins were dead by her hand. She was walled up in a tiny room in her castle and given food through a small slot in a wall. She was found dead in 1614 and buried in a distant town.

Bathory rose after her burial as a true vampire. She roamed the fringes of Eastern Europe until all who could recognize her were dead, then built a new identity as a foreign noblewoman. In this manner she survived until the

modern day, practicing her atrocities much more carefully.

In recent decades, Bathory has been in the employ of several decadent nations, usually acting as a torturer for the political enemies of the current regime. She dresses in finery appropriate to the occasion, except when working, when she wears form-fitting black or camouflaged clothing. She is sometimes accompanied by practitioners of dark magic, welcome aides to her dark pleasures. She avoids making ghouls unless she feels threatened.

Bathory leads an odd dual life—in cycles. She needs attention and praise for her looks by people of high standing, so she spend weeks among the elite, feeding casually like a normal vampire. After a time, her darker side arises, and she feels an overpowering need to torture people to death, at which times she hires out her services to despots and crime lords.

Her claustrophobia dates from her imprisonment in her own castle; whenever she is in a room smaller than 3 meters on a side without an obvious escape path, she is affected by her phobia. Her wasteful metabolism is unusual; she can wake without spending the full 3 FX points, but doing so causes her to age visibly (appearing in

helpful and generous to those that serve her well. Eventually, of course, she will succumb to her darker side again and turn against those who know her. Under such circumstances, it is likely that the heroes could assume that she was possessed or controlled in some way, preventing them from using lethal force to subdue her, all the while she is quite happy to shed copious amounts of their blood to feed her cursed youth.

Note, of course, that if Bathory is used in a STAR*DRIVE campaign and is encountered off Earth, she must have found a way to circumvent the drivespace death.

ADVENTURE TRACK

Specific hooks for Gamemasters wishing to use such a powerful vampire in their campaigns include the following ideas. If used in an ongoing campaign, they could form the skeleton of a vampires subplot centering on the deadly Lady Bathory:

† While on an unrelated mission, the heroes encounter their first vampire. If they dispatch the creature publicly, they draw Lady Bathory's eye.

LADY BATHORY IS A DEADLY FOE IN ANY ALTERNITY CAMPAIGN, BUT EVEN SHE IS ONLY A PALE SHADOW OF VLAD DRACULA, THE FATHER OF DRAGONS.

her early 40s if she only spends 2 points, or about 55 if she only spends 1 FX energy point). As she is extremely vain and concerned about her appearance, she will arise in this fashion only if she is not going to be unobserved, is running low on FX energy, and will be able to feed soon.

Lady Bathory is completely ruthless. Her true goal is to amass sufficient social and financial means to continue enjoying her depraved lifestyle. To that effect, she has slowly been saving money over time; she is moderately wealthy as of the late 20th century.

BATHORY IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Lady Bathory can be used in nearly any sort of role. As a hired killer or torturer, she's a tough opponent with a vast arsenal of tricks. She could be encountered as part of a terrorist or revolutionary group, pretending to be a captive until circumstances allow her to attack or escape.

She is mysterious enough that introducing her as a false lead in an investigation can distract the heroes from those truly responsible. With her interest in power and money, she could even act as an employer or liaison to the heroes, soliciting them to acquire items or make contacts for her—as long as her temper and baser habits are kept in check.

Lady Bathory could remain in her "normal" state for a month or more at a time, during which time she seems

† Bathory employs the characters to capture a group of terrorists. After their successful mission, the heroes learn that their adversaries were freedom fighters Bathory was hired to kidnap and torture. Even the most inquisitive groups are unlikely to learn Bathory's true nature at this point.

† Depending on earlier relations, Bathory might point the heroes in the direction of weak vampires she wishes to eliminate or else strong vampires she wishes to slay the heroes.

† Ever mindful of her ancient lover's continued existence, Bathory uses the heroes to find clues as to Dracula's current abode. Clever heroes might deduce Bathory's identity.

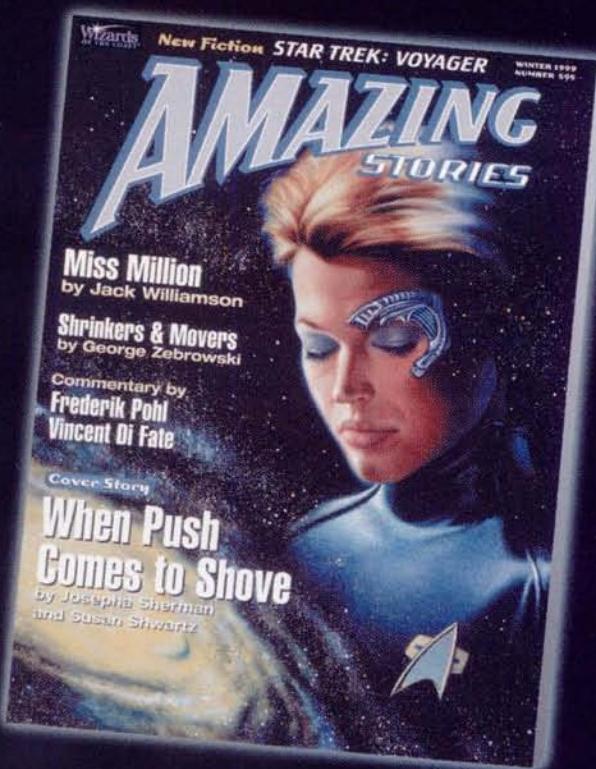
† Should the heroes locate Dracula and survive, Bathory might formulate a plan to steal his power. Unable to face him one-on-one, Bathory needs the heroes to locate an arcane artifact or even to employ conventional weapons against the father of all vampires. If stealing Dracula's power is even possible, the heroes might be the proverbial kingmakers caught between two impossibly powerful foes. In any event, Dracula's vampire powers should include all those described in this article plus an equal number of powers devised by the Gamemaster—perhaps even the ability to transform into the legendary dragon itself.

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Dragon Mirth™



By Dwain Meyer

MIND BLAST

Both Melf's Minute Meteors and Mordenkainen's Magnificent Mansion are spells with three M's in their names. But there's one spell in the PLAYER'S HANDBOOK that has three M's in one word. What's the spell?

You can find the solution to this *MIND BLAST* on page 88



"Boy, you must have a hollow leg!"

By Aaron Williams



"It was running fine when all of a sudden the 'Check Horse' light came on."

COMPLAINTS



By Dwain Meyer

The UNSpeakable Off

by John Kovalic

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SERFING THE NET

MIND FLAYERS

no.
5

by Mike Selinker

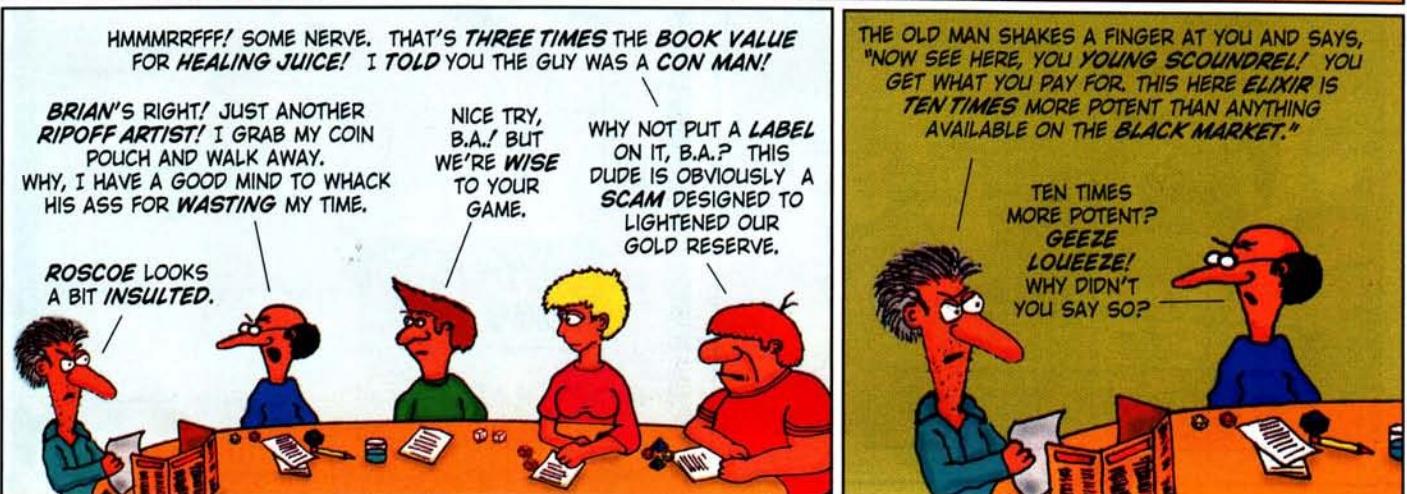
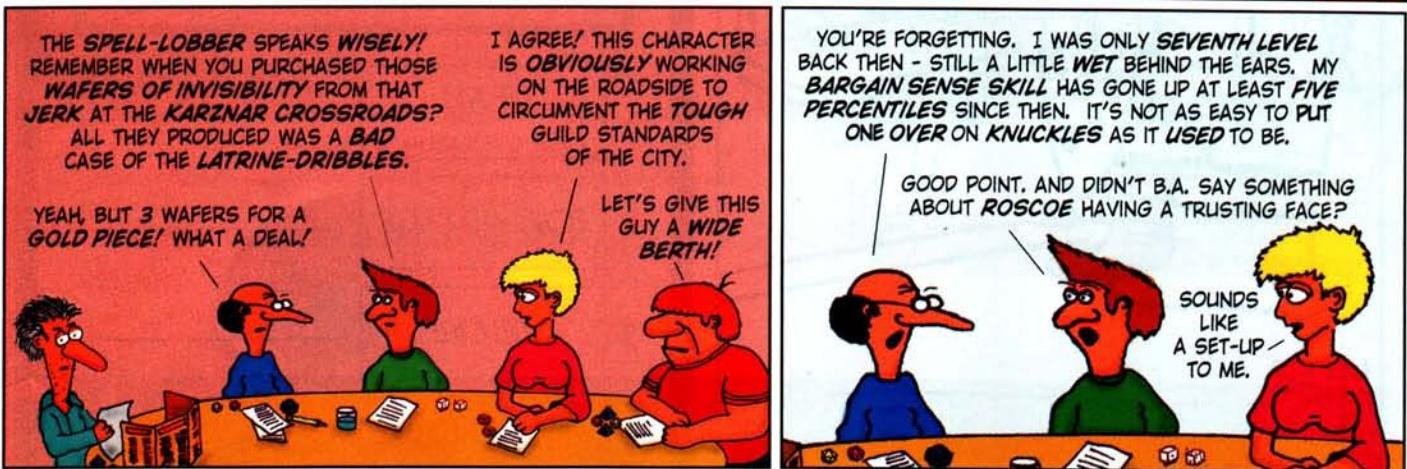
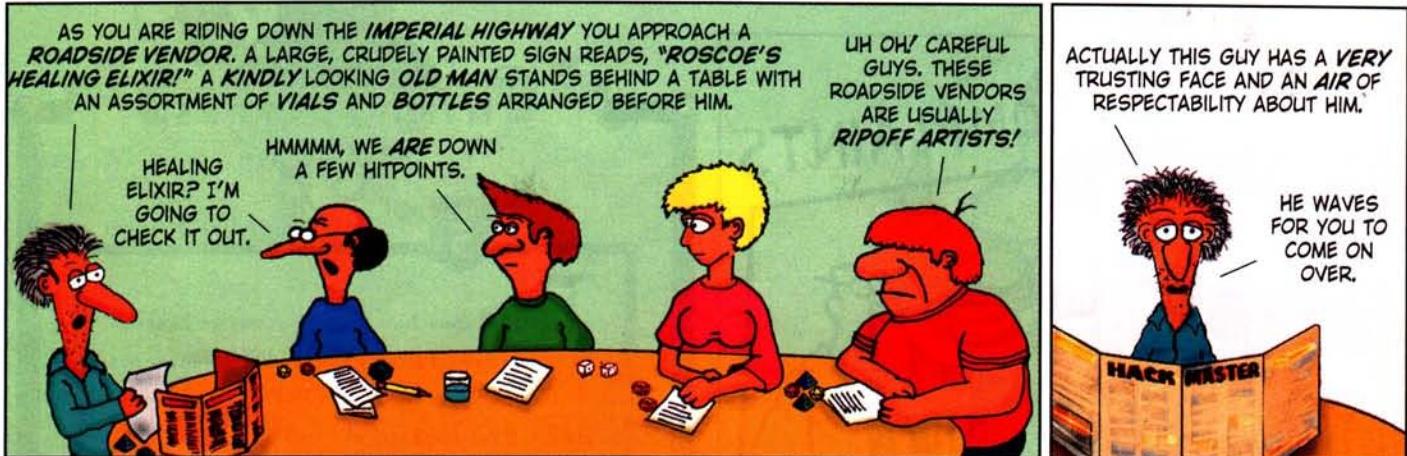
These spells have been taken way too literally. So, for example, if you saw the word SKIN made out of rock, you'd know it was STONESKIN. Can you identify these other spells?

- | | | |
|----|-----------|-------|
| I | DEAD | _____ |
| 2 | DEAMIMAGE | _____ |
| 3 | PLAIE | _____ |
| 4 | WALK | _____ |
| 5 | RUNE'S | _____ |
| 6 | WOOD | _____ |
| 7 | VPH'S | _____ |
| 8 | WA TER | _____ |
| 9 | SPH ERE | _____ |
| 10 | YTIVARG | _____ |
| II | CAD | _____ |
| 12 | IRATELY | _____ |

Knight@MindscapeProductions

Knights of the Dinner Table

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN
STORY SUGGESTED BY
STEVE JOHANSSON & KEN ALBERY !!!



OKAY, SO HOW 'BOUT A FREE SAMPLE? I WANT TO BE EXTRA SURE IT'S THE REAL STUFF BEFORE I LAY MY MONEY DOWN.

NOT A PROBLEM. ROSCOE PUNCHES YOU IN THE FACE FOR SIX POINTS OF DAMAGE



HE PULLS THE STOPPER OUT OF ONE OF THE VIALS AND HANDS IT TO YOU. "HERE! LICK THIS! IT SHOULD TAKE THE STING AWAY."

OH, HA HA! I GUESS THAT'S SUPPOSED TO BE FUNNY OR SOMETHING. WELL, I'M NOT LAUGHING.

BIG DEAL! THAT'S NO TEST. YOU NEED SOME REAL BLOOD-LETTING IF YOU WANT TO SEE HOW GOOD A HEALING POTION WORKS.



BLOOD LETTING??!! WELL HOW THE HELL AM I SUPPOSED TO DO THAT?

EASY! I TAKE A SWING AT YOU WITH MY HACKMASTER +12. I'LL PULL MY PUNCH OF COURSE - TO LESSEN THE DAMAGE.

HEY, THAT JUST MIGHT WORK. LET'S DO IT.

UH OH! HERE COMES TROUBLE.

I SUGGEST YOU MAKE IT A CALLED SHOT, DAVE.



A FEW SECONDS LATER...

OKAY, SO I'LL TAKE OFF MY LEFT SHIN-GUARD. JUST AIM FOR MY LOWER-LEG AND BE SURE TO DAMPEN YOUR DAMAGE. YOU WITH ME?

YEAH, YEAH, NO SWEAT! GIVE ME SOME SWINGING ROOM.

UH, GUYS? WHAT ABOUT THE PLUS TWELVE MODIFIER FOR THE SWORD?



A TOSS OF THE DICE LATER...

AND IT LOOKS LIKE A ... A ... UH ... ER ... A NATURAL TWENTY??!!

ACRIT??!!



YOU ROLLED A FRICKIN' CRITICAL HIT? DOUBLE DAMAGE?? WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU?

SORRY, DUDE. ON A CRIT MY HACKMASTER SWORD AUTOMATICALLY SEVERS!

AND DON'T FORGET TO DOUBLE THE +12 TO DAMAGE RATING OF THE SWORD. THAT'S AN ADDITIONAL 24 POINTS!



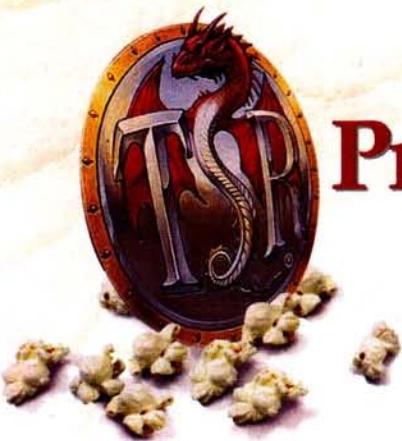
A WEE BIT LATER...

OKAY, NEW HOUSE RULE! FROM NOW ON, YOU HAVE TO CHECK YOUR DICE BAGS IN AT THE DOOR BEFORE BELLYING UP TO THE TABLE. THIS IS THE LAST TIME I GET BEANED WITH A HURLED DICE BAG JUST BECAUSE SOMEBODY DOESN'T LIKE ONE OF MY CALLS.

I GUESS I'LL TRY TO TRACK DOWN THAT STRAY DOG WHO WANDERED OFF WITH KNUCKLE'S ARM WHILE HE WAS SCUFFLING WITH THE OLD MAN. DID ANYONE HAPPEN TO NOTICE WHICH DIRECTION THE MUTT WAS HEADING?

LOOKS LIKE YOU COULD USE SOME HEALING POTION ON THAT EYE, B.A.





Previews

OCTOBER

Priest's Spell Compendium, Volume 2

An AD&D® Accessory

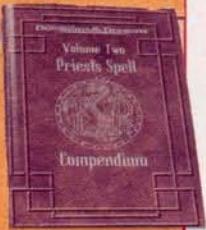
Edited by Jon Pickens

The monumental task of collecting every official priest spell for the AD&D game continues with the second volume of the *Priest's Spell Compendium*. All spells have been updated so players and DMs can use them in any AD&D game. This is the official and definitive source for priest spells.

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TSR 11421

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Introduction to the ALTERNITY® Adventure Game

By William W. Connors and Sean K. Reynolds

Open an entire galaxy of gaming with the ALTERNITY science fiction game. This set welcomes new players to an exciting science fiction universe where they control the action! Each game comes complete with everything needed to play, including a book full of exciting scenarios, pregenerated heroes, and dice to keep the action moving. Use this boxed set as an entry point into the whole family of ALTERNITY products, or continue with the ALTERNITY Fast-Play adventure, *Incident at Exile*.

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The mysterious Carnival rolls into town, where it astounds, entertains, and occasionally repulses before disappearing again. *Carnival* can appear in any AD&D campaign, and it includes the freakish inhabitants of the traveling show, adventure hooks, and rules for turning PCs into terrifying freaks should they linger too long among the tents and wagons.

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Murder in Tarsis

A DRAGONLANCE® Novel

By John Maddox Roberts

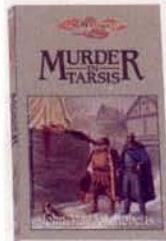
Who killed Ambassador Bloodarrow?

Time is running out for an unlikely trio of detectives. They know that failing to solve the mystery means death. The plot unfolds in Tarsis, the once beautiful seaport city now landlocked by the devastating Cataclysm.

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White Plume Mountain

A GREYHAWK® Novel

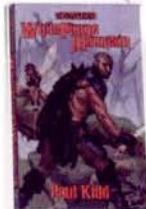
By Paul Kidd

A hero, a pixie, and a sentient hell hound pelt with an obsessive case of pyromania battle the agents of the evil Iuz.

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A D&D Introductory Game

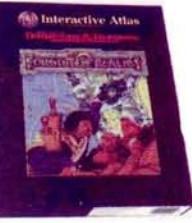
By Jeff Grubb, Bill Slavicsek, and Thomas M. Reid

This game is the perfect bridge between computer and paper-based RPGs. Using the award-winning D&D® rules and the bestselling *Diablo II* setting, this boxed set contains everything needed to start roleplaying. It features a rulebook, a book of quests, monsters from the world of *Diablo II*, five ready-to-play heroes from the computer game, dice, and quest tiles so you can build each adventure as you play.

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NOVEMBER

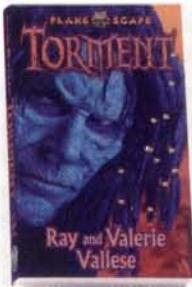
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By JD Wiker

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DARK•MATTER

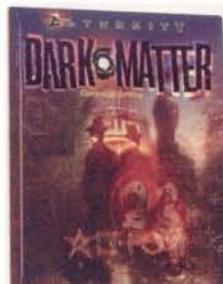
An ALTERNITY Campaign Setting

By Wolfgang Baur with Monte Cook

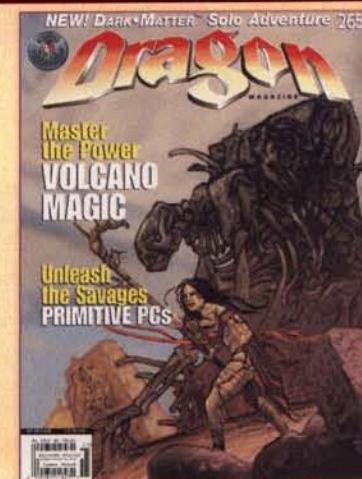
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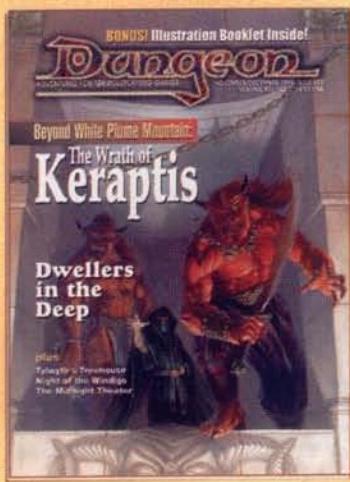
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illithid, derro, aboleth, kuo-toa, svirfneblin, and dwarves as well as the cities of the Underdark where they dwell. Drizzt includes notes on the tricks of survival in the Underdark, making this product an excellent guide for adventurers who wish to take their campaigns into "the night below."

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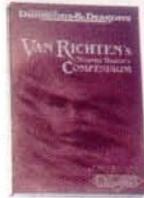
DECEMBER

Van Richten's Monster Hunter's Compendium, Volume Two

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By TSR Staff

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A FORGOTTEN REALMS Accessory

By Eric L. Boyd

It's been a while since the famous drow ranger ventured into his native Underdark, but he hasn't forgotten that he has many enemies there, and chances are they haven't forgotten about him either. Hence, Drizzt has called upon various friends to bring him reports concerning the drow, duergar,



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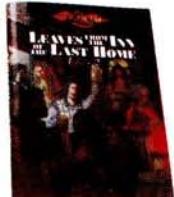
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Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home, Volume Two

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Edited by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman

A sequel to the wildly popular *Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home*, this sourcebook contains historical notes, records of the peoples of Krynn, recipes, drawings of gnomish inventions, and, of course, a list of kender insults.



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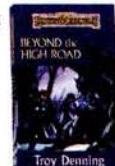
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By Troy Denning

In the land of Cormyr, Princess Tanalasta's involvement with a sinister religious order worries her father, King Azoun, as well as the royal magician. Meanwhile a terrible evil prepares an all-out attack on the kingdom.



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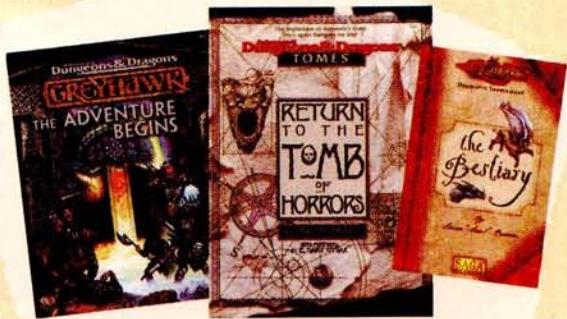
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TSR NEWS

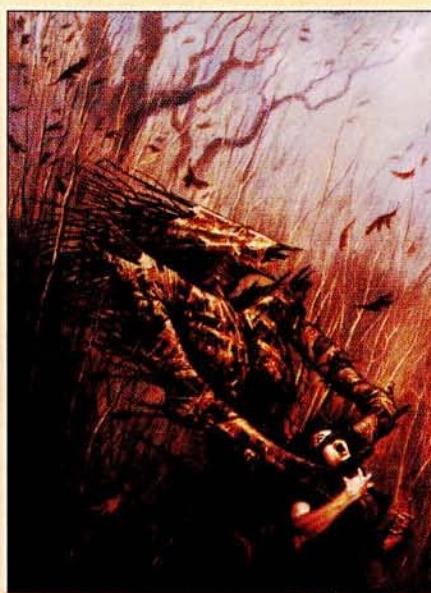
Origins Awards Winners

This year's Origins Awards recognized several Wizards of the Coast roleplaying products as best in their categories. Winners included *Return to the Tomb of Horrors* for Best Roleplaying Adventure, *GREYHAWK: The Adventure Begins* for Best Roleplaying Supplement, and the

DRAGONLANCE Bestiary for the Best Graphic Presentation of a Roleplaying Game, Adventure, or Supplement. *DRAGON® Magazine* extends a heartfelt congratulations to all the talented authors, artists, editors, and graphic designers who earned these awards, and thanks to all who selected them as this year's favorites.



Lockwood Scores at Dragoncon



In addition, Todd's covers for *Children of the Night: The Created* and *DRAGON Magazine* #258, "Mage vs. Machine" will appear in the next issue of *Spectrum*, the juried annual compendium of the best in Science Fiction and Fantasy art, published by Underwood Books. Way to go, Todd!



Todd Lockwood, staff illustrator at Wizards of the Coast, received two awards at this year's Dragoncon convention, one of the largest East Coast science fiction and fantasy conventions. His painting for the DRAGONLANCE® Fifteenth Anniversary adventure won the award for Best Professional Color piece, and the same piece was named Best in Show.

Profiles



BROM

The fantasy artist talks

about monsters, the darkly beautiful, and Norman Rockwell.

by Stephen Kenson

"I've been cursed with creating monsters from the day I could draw," says fantasy artist Brom. If indeed he's cursed, then he's cursed with success.

Born March 9th, 1965, in Albany, Georgia, Brom is the son of an Army aviator. And yes, Brom is his real name. "I get that asked more than just about any other question. It's my real name, my last name. I got called Brom all the time as a kid, and it just stuck."

Brom spent his school-age years on the move, living in places like Japan, Alabama, and Hawaii. He graduated from high school in Frankfurt, Germany.

From his earliest memory he has been obsessed with the creation of the weird, the monstrous, and the beautiful. "I've always been drawing," he says. "So many people spend their entire lives figuring out what they want to do, but I've always known that my calling was creating these things."

Although he's been drawing and painting for as long as he can remember, Brom has never taken any formal art classes. "I wouldn't exactly call myself self-taught, because I've always looked at the work of other artists and emulated what I liked about it. So you can say they taught me." In this way, Brom learned from the work of Frank Frazetta, N.C. Wyeth, and ... Norman Rockwell? How does a fantasy illustrator famous for strange creatures and twisted landscapes draw inspiration from a famous painter of homey scenes of Americana?

"Okay," he laughs, "Rockwell isn't the kind of inspiration most people expect from me, but he just painted things so well. To me it's not so much the genre but the way it's done, and you have to admire his technique."

Brom began his professional career as a commercial illustrator for clients like Coke, IBM, and CNN. In 1989, at the age of twenty-four, he hired on as a full time staff artist at TSR. He contributed his distinctive look to all of TSR's game and book lines, particularly the DARK SUN® setting, which drew much of its appeal from Brom's imagery.

"I pretty much designed the look and feel of the DARK SUN campaign. I was doing paintings before they were even writing about the setting. I'd do a

painting or a sketch, and the designers wrote those characters and ideas into the story. I was very involved in the development process. I've been fortunate to be involved in the development end of a lot of projects I've worked on, from role-playing games to computer games."

And Brom has worked on a lot of them. In 1993 he returned to the freelance market, still specializing in the darker side of the genre. His artwork graces books from authors like Michael Moorcock, Anne McCaffrey, and Terry Brooks, as well as roleplaying games, card games, and comic books.

Brom also contributed his conceptual talents to characters and creatures for computer games such as *Heretic II* and several top creature houses in film, including Academy award-winning Stan Winston Studios. He also co-created, art directed, and illustrated the *Dark Age* collectible card game.

In 1998, Brom returned to TSR, where he has been happily painting for the ALTERNITY®, AD&D®, FORGOTTEN REALMS®, and PLANESCAPE® lines as well as producing stunning covers for *DRAGON® Magazine* and *DUNGEON® Adventures*.

In all his work, Brom conjures distinctive, dramatic, and often disturbing visions. His recently released art book *Darkwerks* (distributed by Sirius Entertainment) contains a powerful and haunting selection of these visions.

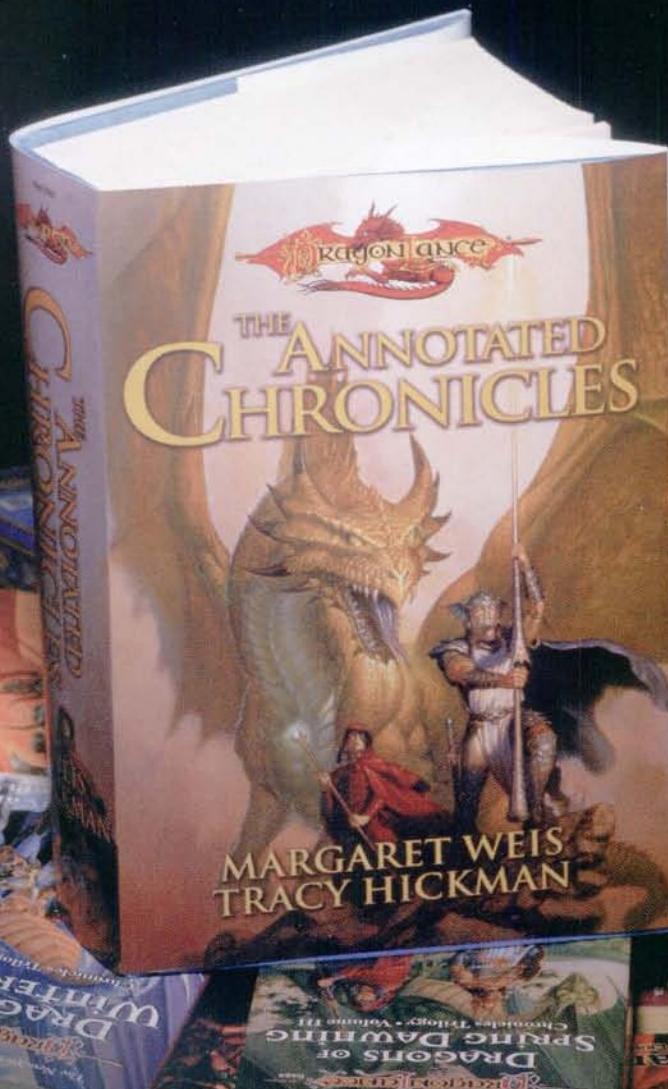
"My favorite type of thing to illustrate is the dark and the disturbing," he says. "When I say 'dark,' I don't mean limited to horror. I like things with that dark, evil feel to them. I'd rather paint dark fantasy undead than shining heroes any day. I like the aesthetics of the dark side."

In addition to his prolific artwork, Brom also expresses himself through writing. "I've got a 300-page novel that's almost finished," he says. "I love to write. It's creative, but it's a different part of your brain from illustration."

Along with his work for Wizards of the Coast, Brom has several other projects in the works, including a second art book. "I'm also working on a dark, twisted little illustrated book. It should be out in the next year or so."

Writing or artwork, fans can count on Brom continuing to bring his dark visions to life.

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Weis and Hickman unearthed nine boxes of notes—a treasure trove detailing the creation of the characters and events that generated a new realm in shared-world fiction. These rare insights are revealed in the *Annotated Chronicles*, a narrative tome that houses *Dragons of Autumn Twilight*, *Dragons of Winter Night*, and *Dragons of Spring Dawning*, with personal insights from the minds behind the foremost modern fantasy epic.

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